



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2026

For more information contact:

Katie Carlson • Director of Communications • (316) 788-8427

Derby Public Schools I Make A Difference Award Winners Announced at Board of Education Meeting on January 26

Missy Nuse, staff, and Rhonda Banks, volunteer, are the January recipients of the I Make A Difference Award.

This month's Staff I Make A Difference Award winner is Missy Nuse, Office Clerk at Park Hill Elementary. Missy is truly one of a kind. Her energy, positivity and encouragement make her a beloved presence among both students, staff and families. Simply by being herself, she uplifts the entire Park Hill community, creating an environment that is joyful, friendly and deeply supportive.

As an Office Clerk, Missy plays a vital role in the daily operations of Park Hill, overseeing student attendance and managing the cafeteria. Her warm and approachable demeanor helps families feel welcomed and supported from the very first interaction, whether she is checking in about an absence or helping address a concern. She communicates clearly and compassionately, ensuring that students are safe, accounted for and connected to the support they need.

What truly sets Missy apart is the joy she brings to every space she enters. She has transformed the cafeteria into one of the most enjoyable parts of the school day. With her lighthearted spirit and genuine care for every child, she creates an atmosphere that families frequently comment on and appreciate. Danae Bennett, Park Hill Elementary Principal, shared, "it's not unusual to find her singing or dancing with students, often prompting a spontaneous, cafeteria-wide flash mob, all while maintaining a smooth, well-organized lunch service." Her approach has earned such positive recognition across the district that other principals have reached out to observe the lunch process firsthand.

Beyond the cafeteria, Missy's attention to detail and dedication shine through in her work with attendance. She carefully tracks student attendance, promptly reaches out to families and immediately communicates any concerns to the appropriate staff members. Her proactive approach helps ensure student safety and allows the school to support families quickly and effectively.

Missy's commitment extends far beyond her job description. She memorizes student allergies, makes sure every child is fed and is always ready to step in whenever help is needed. Through her reliability, compassion and joyful spirit, Missy makes a meaningful impact every single day.

This month's volunteer I Make A Difference Award winner is Rhonda Banks, volunteer at Wineteer Elementary. Known affectionately by students and staff as "Momma Banks", Rhonda has been a consistent and caring

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Derby Public Schools strives to create a safe and inclusive culture and a comprehensive educational experience that propels students toward their fullest potential so they can positively impact their community.

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presence at Wineteer Elementary, volunteering daily for the past two years. While she began volunteering to support her daughter, Jasmine Banks, a first grade teacher at Wineteer, her impact quickly grew to touch students, teachers and staff throughout the building.

Students adore Momma Banks, and on the rare occasion she is absent, students are quick to ask how she is doing and when she will be back. Her presence brings comfort, consistency and joy to the classroom, and students respond to her with respect and enthusiasm.

Rhonda's dedication is evident in all that she does. She works with students on sight words each day, helps with math small groups, compiles math packets and provides one-on-one support on assignments. She also takes time for daily check-ins with specific students, helping them feel supported and encouraged. In addition, she assists with crafts and holiday parties and helps keep Mrs. Banks' classroom clean and organized.

What makes Momma Banks special is her heart for service and connection. She goes out of her way to ensure students are set up for success, building positive relationships that help them feel confident, supported and ready to learn. Her presence strengthens not only the classroom but the entire school community, as she is always willing to step in whenever help is needed. Rhonda's generosity, kindness and commitment continue to make a positive impact in the Wineteer community.



Pictured: (left to right) Rhonda Banks, Missy Nuse.

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