



Memorandum

To: Board of Education
CC: Dr. Debbie Jones, Superintendent
From: Leslee Wright, Director of Communications
RE: Extra Mile Service Award
Date: January 21, 2025

Sonya Wilson is a bus trainer and driver in Bentonville Schools. She's known for decorating her bus for every holiday: Valentine's Day, Christmas, St. Patrick's Day—all of them. But, when Halloween came this past fall, her kids said, "Miss Sonya, you barely decorated." They had no idea—no idea that Sonya was struggling to put one foot in front of the other after her 22-year-old son, Jayzek, was killed in a car accident only months earlier.

Despite her profound pain, Sonya kept going and kept driving. She drove every morning and afternoon and took on the field trips as they presented. That's when she met Erin Rankin, a teacher at Apple Glen Elementary. Erin and her students were traveling on Sonya's bus for a field trip, and she noted the joy Sonya exuded.

In her nomination, Erin wrote, "Sonya decorated her bus on the inside and outside, and it's MAGICAL. She played Christmas carols like 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer' that my students sang along with."

She added, "I think it's special that Sonya cares so much about her bus riders that she would create an environment for them to enjoy going to and from school."

In this life, no one emerges unscathed, but Sonya says joy isn't contingent upon circumstances. She says it's a choice. She chooses joy in honor of her son and practices joy for her littlest children.

We asked Sonya what she loves about her job. She said simply, "Everything."

Please join us in recognizing Sonya Wilson.

