



Dream, Believe, Become, Lead

Blue Ridge Elementary School
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For Immediate Release:

A Lesson in Legacy: Local Teacher Recognized for Years of Bringing Holiday Joy to Military Families

Reaching military families from rural Ashe County for decades. Mrs. Amanda Estes has partnered with Trees for Troops throughout her tenure at Blue Ridge Elementary. She has been awarded the Christmas SPIRIT Award, where the Board of Trustees nominates and votes on each year's winner. The 2026 recipient is Amanda Estes.

Each year, Mrs. Estes collaborates with each grade level and has students draw pictures and write messages that are tagged with donated Christmas Trees and then sent out to military families.

Not only is this a great way to continue fostering a sense of honor for our military, but it is also a way we continue to grow leaders at Blue Ridge. Many of the families that receive trees that our

students have tagged receive a letter of thanks back, and they provide their location, which our teachers are able to use as a way to deepen our students' connection to geography.

Trees for Troops started in 2005, taking donated trees to military bases across the United States and overseas. The National Christmas Tree Association and Christmas SPIRIT Foundation have a partnership with FedEx to get trees to military bases and families. Their current mark is 326,273 (*Christmas SPIRIT Foundation*, n.d.), with free trees to families over the past 20 years. If you would like to get involved, here is a link: <https://christmasspiritfoundation.org/>.

We are excited to celebrate Mrs. Estes and the students of Blue Ridge Elementary as they continue to spread joy and happiness to military families each year. Congratulations, Mrs. Amanda Estes, for being named the 2026 SPIRIT Award Winner.

References

Christmas SPIRIT Foundation. (n.d.). Retrieved June 30, 2026, from <https://christmasspiritfoundation.org/>