

Extra Mile Award Recipients

The extra mile award is offered each year to recognize an individual or an organization that regularly goes that additional step in serving students experiencing homelessness to ensure their continued access to and success in school. Thank you to all these winners for their work to support children and families in their communities!

2007

Sharon Belt
Homeless Education Liaison, Greene County Public Schools

In her first year on the job, Sharon went above and beyond the call of duty in serving families experiencing homelessness. She found ways to help improve their situation through one-on-one counseling, finding appropriate financial resources, and making direct contact with people in the community who were willing to assist families in need. In working with one family, in particular, Sharon understood their desperate attempts to make a better life, even in the face of bad credit and mounting debt from hospital care. She connected the family with a church donation pool that could enable them to rent an apartment, paved the way to a successful application with the apartment landlord, and helped the family work out a budget to be sure they could maintain their new housing!

2006

Tom Italiano
Transportation Planner, Fairfax County Public Schools

Tom Italiano is one of those special leaders, who always stops to ask, “what’s the best solution for this child?” Tom works diligently to maintain stability for students experiencing homelessness by keeping them in their schools of origin so they can have the same teacher, the same classmates and be on familiar ground while the rest of their lives are in flux. Tom studies complex routing, arranging transportation that covers Virginia’s largest school division, sometimes crosses county and state lines, and accommodates after school activity schedules and day care needs! These arrangements often change from day to day based on the child’s activities and the family’s housing instability. He works closely with contracted services, such as cab companies, to sensitize drivers to the needs of these children and understand possible behavioral issues.

In one of the many letters we received supporting Tom’s nomination, we learn that his priority is the best interest of each child, providing much needed transportation and safe handling so families have one less thing to worry about in their busy lives. When Kathi Sheffel, Homeless Education Liaison for Fairfax County Public Schools, calls the Project HOPE-Virginia office to work through a situation with a family experiencing homelessness, transportation is always a top priority but never a barrier to the families she serves. “Tom is handling it.” “It’s not easy, but Tom said he would take care of it.” are common refrains we hear. Thank you, Tom, for all you do to support students in your school division and to support your colleagues in doing their work as well.

2005

**Charlotte Pacheco
Transportation Planner, Virginia Beach City Public Schools**

Charlotte Pacheco is special transportation coordinator at Virginia Beach City Public Schools. She ensures that children and youth receive the most efficient and effective transportation to the school of origin. Serving in Virginia's second largest school division, Charlotte makes sure that children are able to remain stable in their school settings, regardless of their movements throughout south Hampton Roads. Thank you for all you do!

2004

**Shana Norman
Child Advocate, Salvation Army Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter**

Shana Norman shows her commitment to the children she serves in the shelter by coordinating community resources to provide as much normalcy as possible in their lives. She arranges special events so they can have positive experiences during their time in the shelter. Shana has also coordinated supply drives and Christmas gift drives to try to give "her kids" a taste of happiness. Thank you, Shana for your efforts to support children experiencing homelessness and violence in your community.

2003

**Marshall Thompson IV
Student, College of William and Mary; Volunteer Webmaster, Project HOPE-
Virginia**

Marshall is a very special part of the Project HOPE team. As a youth, he experienced homelessness and lived at the Virginia Home for Boys. In 1999 he began volunteering his technological skills while he was an undergraduate at The College of William and Mary because he felt it was important to give something back to those who helped him succeed in school. Since that time, he has revamped the website layout and organization, kept information up-to-date and taught us how to make the site more effective for all computer systems and secure. Now, as a graduate of William and Mary and a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, he is still supporting our site and helping us to develop outreach projects through secure web databases. He is even designing a site that we can use to update and manage the website "after he is gone."

Marshall W. Thompson, IV, is that most exceptional of individuals, one who uses a highly valuable skill in web design and computer programming to the benefit of the nation's homeless students and families, rather than to more lucrative ends. Because of Marshall's efforts, the Project HOPE webpage is an outstanding media presentation that serves as a medium for accessing valuable information and resources to serve our nation's students. He is deserving of the recognition associated with the product of his time that he freely gives to Project HOPE.

2002

**Charles Harris
Spotsylvania County Schools**

The first Extra Mile Award is awarded to Charles Harris from Spotsylvania County Public Schools for his efforts in coordinating interdistrict transportation for children experiencing homelessness. His rapid and caring response to the needs of children enabled them to remain in their school of origin for the entire academic year. Dr. Harris was a trailblazer in providing these services Virginia, immediately after the No Child Left Behind Act went into effect. Thank you for your leadership in this field and for putting the best interests of children first!