

SAMANTHA O'REILLY-STONE  
JENNY RODGERS  
LYNNE PICHETTE  
JASMINE DOIG  
KATHERINE MAGNER  
CHARLENE MURDOCK  
DAVID CHAMBERS

# Director's Citation Awards *and* Employee Recognition Awards



NABIL ALI  
EMILY GRAY

ELISA LAMBERT

LAUREN BROWN

DONNA FORBES

STEPHANIE STEWARD

JULIE CRABB

HERMINA BRUTUS

YOLA JARAWAN

AMANDA WRIGHT

*2023–2024*

LINDA ARENA-GLENN

TODD THOMPSON



# Message from the Director



As we take this opportunity to celebrate the exceptional achievements of staff, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude. Our annual Director's Citation and Employee Recognition Awards provide a moment to recognize the remarkable contributions of educators, support staff, and administrators. Nominated by their peers, it's clear these individuals have consistently gone above and beyond to support our students, our staff, and our school communities.

We are privileged to have such an extraordinary team of leaders within our District. Each day, you inspire, innovate, and create teaching and learning environments that empower our students. Your passion for education and commitment to excellence sets a standard that elevates our entire organization.

To all the award recipients, I extend my heartfelt congratulations. Thank you for being the driving force behind our shared mission to support learning, well-being, and social responsibility.

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pino Buffone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Pino Buffone**

*Director of Education and Secretary of the Board,  
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board*

# 2023-2024 Director's Citation and Employee Recognition Awards

## Director's Citation Award

The Director's Citation Award recognizes outstanding and significant staff contributions to the District and its students over an extended period of time, showing a level of imagination, enthusiasm, and professionalism that constitutes a worthy model for others. It is intended to be a recognition of staff by their colleagues, honouring those who are in the midst of their careers.

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## Employee Recognition Awards

### Health and Safety Award

The Health and Safety Award celebrates outstanding and significant contribution by an OCDSB staff member over an extended period of time or a specific singular contribution of significant impact or benefit to health and safety.

### Innovation Award

The Innovation Award recognizes noteworthy contributions of an OCDSB staff member or team to the development of innovative concepts, suggestions, actions or process improvements that result in immediate and significant ongoing benefit to the District.

### Mentoring Award

The Mentoring Award recognizes the outstanding contributions and support of an OCDSB staff member provided to the Mentoring program that has resulted in having a significant impact in the development of a beginning employee.

### Ronald K. Lynch Memorial Award

The Ronald K. Lynch Memorial Award recognizes an outstanding and significant contribution reflecting either a sustained compassionate and dedicated commitment by an OCDSB employee to the success of students with special education needs, or a specific singular contribution of demonstrated benefit to students with special education needs.

### Excellence in Equity Award

The Excellence In Equity Award celebrates the outstanding and significant contribution by an OCDSB staff member to serving the District and its students by aligning and integrating equitable and inclusive education principles and practices that value and leverage the diversity of our students and communities in their daily work.

## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

**Nabil Ali,**  
Chief Custodian,  
Summerside Public School

**David Chambers,**  
Teacher, Ridgemont High School

**Julie Crabb,**  
Teacher, Canterbury High School

**Donna Forbes,**  
Teacher, Longfields-Davidson  
Heights Secondary School (Int.)

**Yola Jarawan,**  
Office Administrator,  
Glen Ogilvie Public School

**Katherine Magner,**  
Research Officer, Research,  
Evaluation and Analytics Division

**Charlene Murdock,**  
Early Childhood Educator,  
Elgin Street Public School

**Samantha O'Reilly-Stone,**  
Chief Custodian,  
Vimy Ridge Public School

**Lynne Pichette,**  
Teacher, Henry Larsen  
Elementary School

**Jenny Rodgers,**  
Teacher,  
Osgoode Township  
High School

**Stephanie Steward,**  
Office Administrator,  
Robert Bateman  
Public School

**Todd Thompson,**  
Principal,  
Shingwàkons Public School

**Amanda Wright,**  
Team Manager,  
Payroll

## THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS HAVE BEEN SELECTED AS FOLLOWS;

### HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD

**Emily Gray,**  
Teacher, Ridgemont High School

### INNOVATION AWARD

**Elisa Lambert,**  
Teacher, John McCrae  
Secondary School

### MENTORING AWARD

**Linda Arena-Glenn,**  
Teacher, Knoxdale  
Public School

### RONALD K. LYNCH MEMORIAL AWARD

**Lauren Brown,**  
Educational Assistant,  
Knoxdale Public School

### THE EXCELLENCE IN EQUITY AWARD

**Hermina Brutus,**  
Teacher, Woodroffe High School

**Jasmine Doig,**  
Indigenous Graduation Coach,  
Ottawa Technical Secondary School



## *Award Recipients*

# Director's Citation Awards

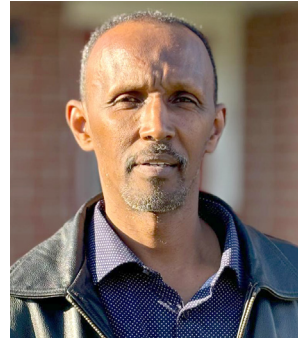
The following pages include the names of recipients along with excerpts of the nominations submitted by their colleagues.



## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### **Nabil Ali,**

**Chief Custodian,  
Summerside Public School**



Nabil's journey within the OCDSB is not just a testament to his professional growth but also a shining example of dedication, reliability, and community service.

Throughout his career, Nabil has exemplified the qualities of a true leader and a committed team member. His unwavering dedication to his role has been evident in his willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. Nabil has consistently demonstrated his reliability, always being available to assist in facilities-related emergencies across the district, regardless of the time or location.

One of Nabil's most admirable qualities is his willingness to step up to the plate, even in the face of adversity. Whether it's responding to emergencies close to home or traveling across the city to lend a hand, Nabil has always been there, ready to support his colleagues and ensure the smooth operation of OCDSB facilities. His commitment to his role knows no bounds, as he has been known to work tirelessly, even on weekends and in the early hours, to address any issues that arise.

Nabil's leadership extends beyond his day-to-day responsibilities. He serves as a role model for his colleagues, inspiring them to approach their work with the same level of dedication and passion. His positive attitude and willingness to lend a helping hand have fostered a sense of camaraderie and teamwork within the OCDSB Facilities team, contributing to a supportive and collaborative work environment.

In addition to his exemplary work ethic, Nabil brings a unique perspective to his role as the District's first Somalian Chief Custodian. His presence serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment for members of the Somalian community within the OCDSB and beyond. Nabil's achievements are a testament to the importance of diversity and representation within our school system, and he serves as a beacon of hope for aspiring leaders from all backgrounds.

## David Chambers

Teacher, Ridgemont High School



For more than 30 years, Dave has modeled what it means to be a committed, compassionate, and professional educator. He has shown through his long career that he is a role model who takes the extra time to work with students and staff to foster not only academic excellence but also personal growth and connections within our community. In his math classes, his innovative teaching practices help students build their soft skills while they learn. He supports this by providing his own extra help sessions during his non-teaching time to help students develop their organization and planning skills as part of his teaching philosophy. In his past work as a guidance counselor, he was known by students as an adult that can be trusted to support them to find the pathway that best serves their strengths and interests. No matter his role, he is continuously reflective on his practice and imagining alternative ways to challenge and guide his students through their learning.

Above and beyond his teaching, Dave has also been instrumental in helping students build confidence outside the classroom by running Spartan's Camp at Ridgemont since his arrival at the school in 2007 (previously he ran the leadership camp at South Carleton High School). Dave holds meetings from September to June with a committee of student leaders who develop the programming for leadership camps. Even when schools were unable to host events in person, Dave used his creativity and innovation to offer Spartan's Camp events virtually for the Ridgemont community. Since returning to in-person extracurricular activities, the committee has run three camps per year with small-group sessions run by students and large-group activities guided by Dave. Countless students, whether builders on the committee or participants in the camps, credit Chambers as an influence in their decision to take on new challenges and/or focus on personal growth. In fact, several current teachers and EAs who were former Spartan's Camp students cite Dave as their inspiration for pursuing a career in education. The impact Dave has had on so many generations of students and staff is a testament to the phenomenal educational role model that he is. His enthusiasm, leadership, and talent for bringing out the best in others make him a wholly deserving candidate for a Director's Citation Award.



## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### **Julie Crabb,**

**Teacher, Canterbury High School**



Julie Crabb demonstrates an outstanding devotion to teaching French language and to mentoring of our students through her exceptional professionalism, and a variety of extracurricular opportunities for which she volunteers as an organizer and supervisor. She provides each and every day high quality student learning experiences, planning carefully, giving extra time at lunch, before and after school, and thus supporting those who may need extra help. Julie has contributed in a significant manner for years to the Canterbury High School by enriching the students' life experience through many extracurricular activities ("Relay for Life" leadership for several years, Student leadership "Chill camp" - several years, DELF programme implementation, while at the same time heading and supervising several in-school clubs, among them an award-winning Kiwanis Club). Julie has helped to organize and inform the PA activities for staff and has supported the whole Canterbury HS teaching faculty through her support with the student information system implementation. In addition, most recently, she has been instrumental in helping to implement the destreaming in the French language instruction and differentiated curriculum delivery. Julie has also helped to organize and supervise several out-of-country trips, sacrificing her family time to provide enriching and memorable life experiences to our students.

As an example to her colleagues, Julie embodies calm, inspired leadership. In her daily work with the students, Julie demonstrates utmost professionalism and devotion to meaningful and culturally-sensitive, diverse and inclusive curriculum.

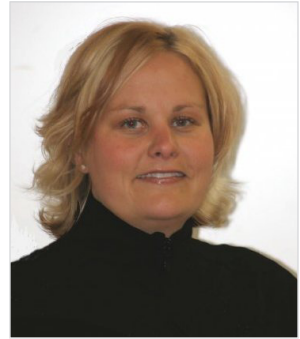
In the words of her students, "Mme Crabb takes interest in our lives beyond just teaching us French. She listens to us. She is patient. She is fair-minded and just. She gives us additional help when we need it. She gives us additional resources and inspires us to work harder and stay curious, and love learning for the sake of learning. She makes the class time interesting and fun. She understands us."

Julie Crabb demonstrates pedagogical best practices, is a generous colleague, and a beloved and respected teacher. Her intellectual prowess, work ethics, and human touch are remarkable. We are lucky to have such professionals and devoted practitioners as part of our community. Julie Crabb is one in a million!

## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### **Donna Forbes,**

**Teacher, Longfields-Davidson Heights  
Secondary School (Int.)**



Donna Forbes consistently demonstrates outstanding and significant contributions that have a positive impact on both our staff and students here at Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School. Donna embodies the spirit of this award. Her enthusiasm for her work is infectious, and her professionalism shines through in all her interactions. She is a highly collaborative colleague, always willing to lend a helping hand. Since its inaugural year, Donna has given tirelessly of herself to help ensure that LDHSS exemplifies a positive and collaborative environment where students and staff can shine.

One of Donna's greatest strengths is her dedication to fostering a positive school environment. Through her positive interactions and development of meaningful activities, she creates a space where students feel supported and engaged. From the sharing of resources and techniques, offering extra time to students for review at break or planning whole school Intermediate activities, Donna brings her positive attitude and sense of team to all endeavours. As a founding staff member, she has willingly taken on many roles throughout her time at LDH - from coaching team sports including Secondary Girl's Field Hockey and Intermediate Girl's Badminton, spearheading the WEB program to foster student leadership and inclusion, to representing staff on Parent Council. She is known for our annual and infamous whole division activity named 'The Amazing Race' that kicks off the school year with our new Raven students. She willingly and selflessly gives of her time to continue to build community here at our school and deserves to be recognized.

Donna is also an invaluable resource to her colleagues. Her willingness to share and provide support wherever possible makes her an unspoken mentor to many in the intermediate division. She is recognized by her colleagues as the "go to" person. She goes out of her way to welcome, help and support all staff, often sharing lesson plans and resources, communicating important day-to-day information all while exemplifying what it is to be a true and caring LDHSS Raven. She is the quintessential team player, always putting the needs of the team and the school above her own. Donna's contributions far exceed the expectations of her role. Donna is a true asset to our school community and is deserving of the Director's Citation Award.

## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### **Yola Jarawan,**

**Office Administrator,  
Glen Ogilvie Public School**



There exist individuals whose dedication, passion, and commitment elevate the standards of excellence. Among these people stands Yola, an exemplary staff member whose contributions to the OCDSB have left an indelible mark on the students, their families, the community and the district. Yola is not only deserving of recognition but serves as an inspiration to all. Yola's journey in the field of education is not merely defined by the years she has dedicated to her profession but by the profound impact she has had on the lives of countless people within and outside of her school. She has boundless energy and devotion, which she infuses into every aspect of her work. Every family, student, and staff member is greeted with kindness and reassured that it will be a great day. Her genuine passion for making people feel good radiates in every interaction. She approaches each day with a zest for life, inspiring those around her to embrace the day ahead of them. Yola's enthusiasm not only energizes the students and staff but also serves as a catalyst for positive change within the school community, fostering a culture of growth, collaboration, and excellence. She exemplifies integrity, dedication, and a tireless commitment to the success and well-being of the Glen O community. Yola goes above and beyond her role as OA. She actively engages with colleagues to share best practices, collaborate on projects, and contributes to the overall improvement of the district. Yola's leadership is characterized by empathy, humility, and a genuine desire to see others succeed. As a champion of diversity and equity, Yola works tirelessly to ensure that all students, regardless of background or circumstance, have access to quality education and opportunities for success.

Yola is more than an OA; she is a leader, an inspiring mentor, and an advocate for education. Her significant contributions to the OCDSB have not only enriched the lives of students but have also elevated the standard of excellence within the district. Yola embodies the values of enthusiasm and professionalism, serving as a model for others to emulate. Yola truly exemplifies the essence of outstanding service and dedication.

## Katherine Magner,

Research Officer, Research, Evaluation  
and Analytics Division



Katherine Magner is a Research Officer who has been with the OCDSB since 2017. I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Kat on various projects such as the school climate survey, the Student Achievement Plan (SAP), the school well-being plan and superintendency planning, as well as on the mental health strategy. While Kat has not worked for the OCDSB for a long time, I cannot say enough about the quality of her work and her openness and willingness to go above and beyond in any circumstance. The caliber of Kat's work is remarkable, she is creative, intuitive, and personable. She is a strong collaborator and completes tasks under tight timelines, with great attention to detail. She welcomes feedback and also offers her ideas which often provide a different and valuable perspective. Her contributions are invaluable, particularly her ability to synthesize complex ideas and translate them into actionable plans.

Beyond involvement in supporting mental health and well-being, Kat's projects have included developing new surveys, designing dashboards, and resources, staff engagement surveys, and transition monitoring after the accommodation reviews. Further, Kat is the Chair of the external research review committee and was the lead on the study on social and emotional skills with OECD. This year, Kat has further exemplified leadership as she has helped shift how the research division supports school administrators. She has led the development of resources and tools for school-based staff, to assist them with using their school-level data to monitor students and track progress. This data is essential when informing decisions and initiatives which determine how best to serve students in our schools.

Kat goes above and beyond with every project she works on, she has developed meaningful relationships with school-based and central colleagues, and is deeply respected by those who know and have the privilege of working with her. She brings an open-mindset and positive attitude to every project she is part of and is sought after by many of us.

## Charlene Murdock,

Early Childhood Educator,  
Elgin Street Public School



Miss Charlene is incredibly deserving of this award. I could easily list 20 parents who are in support of this nomination! She makes every child in the class feel special, and they are all convinced that they are her favourite. She knows everyone's strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes, and uses her in-depth knowledge of the individual students to personalize their learning experiences. She creates safe spaces for students to be creative and explore new things, and encourages them with the same gentle push that a parent would use.

Miss Charlene is also dedicated to building relationships with the children's families. She makes an effort to learn about the family, their culture, special events/celebrations, etc. and keeps that in mind when supporting the class. She is a clear and consistent communicator, and is always eager to answer questions and share ideas.

One of the most impressive things about Charlene is her dedication. At the end of the day, when I arrive at the school for EDP pickup, I regularly see her still in the classroom working on a station or activity that she thinks the children will enjoy. She puts in the extra effort with energy, and you can feel her excitement as she prepares something that she knows will engage the kids when they arrive the next morning. Her passion is impressive and contagious! You can see and feel the impact it has on the students and her colleagues. We are so lucky to have her educating and shaping these young learners.

## Samantha O'Reilly-Stone,

Chief Custodian,  
Vimy Ridge Public School



Sam leads her team with empathy and caring. She greets everyone she meets with a very contagious smile. Her willingness to take on any challenge and see it through is reflected in her everyday work at Vimy Ridge.

She is continuously working at providing the best clean and safe learning environment for students, staff, parents and the community. She deals with any issues with the utmost professionalism. Sam is engaged with the students and staff in a variety of ways including a puzzle group and treats club. Samantha's office is often filled with drawings from students thanking her for the tireless work she is always seen doing. Not even a village of 23 portable classrooms could wear her down!



## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### Lynne Pichette,

Teacher, Henry Larsen Elementary School



Members of Henry Larsen Elementary School enthusiastically nominate Lynne Pichette for the Director's Citation Award, acknowledging her remarkable contributions to the OCDSB and its students. Lynne's unwavering dedication has profoundly impacted students, parents, and colleagues. As the Primary/Junior Event Coordinator, Lynne orchestrated various events, fostering community unity. She also mentors new teachers, earning her a nomination for the Prime Minister's Award. Lynne's creativity shines as the Monthly Front Showcase decorator, adding vibrancy to the school environment. In addition to her diverse roles, Lynne's organizational prowess ensures efficiency and excellence. Her exceptional leadership, mentorship, and commitment make her a deserving recipient of the Director's Citation Award.

She has taught so many different grades and has been exemplary in every single role she has had at our school. Students continue to return to see her and offer to help her at recess and nutrition breaks because they just felt right in her class. Every student feels like they belong and they matter in her class. She began teaching coverage and PE as well as her Grade 2 EFI (or 1/2 or 2/3 depending on the year), and I have never seen a teacher take on PE or a coverage role with so much responsibility and enthusiasm. She can find resources everywhere that no one else can find! She taught the arts, PE, health, etc., and taught every single subject as if it were the most important subject for those students to learn. On top of her exemplary teaching skills, she is the most organized and tech-savvy teacher you can find. I couldn't even dream of being half as organized as she is. She plans, organizes, and implements activities, field trips, guest speakers, assemblies, meetings, and extracurricular activities including true sport activities for primary/junior students after school. She is always willing to share resources and ideas with colleagues, and offers help whenever it is needed. There is so much more I can say but basically, as both a colleague and a parent of one of her students, I have never met a teacher that deserves this award as much as Lynne Pichette.

## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### Jenny Rodgers,

Teacher, Osgoode Township High School



Jenny has been a strong advocate for healthy, active living throughout her entire career. She strongly supports women in sport and participation in class, before, during and after school as well as in the community. She leads by example in challenging herself to be active and community-minded. She has been the OTHS department head of Health and Physical Education for many years as well as recently doubling as the Athletic Director. In the latter role, she helped to coach and support this year's gold medal winning OFSAA girls 'A' championship basketball team who also experienced success as city champions. In addition, she coached junior girls volleyball and varsity ringette. Jenny works tirelessly behind the scenes to make things easier for all the coaches of interscholastic sports. She organizes all the behind-the-scenes administrative requirements for every interscholastic team to ensure things run smoothly and so that coaches feel more comfortable coming forward to coach. Her colleagues appreciate how much Jenny is willing to do for teams to be successful while minimizing the demands on coaches.

Jenny is constantly looking for innovative approaches for students in her SHSM program to provide them with experiential learning in the field of Justice, Community Safety and Emergency Services by bringing in current paramedics and emergency call operators, among others as guest speakers, and individuals to provide certifications to our students. For her classes, she connected with the Abilities Centre to arrange to bring wheelchair basketball to OTHS. Students and staff were provided the opportunity to participate in this challenging para-sport and everyone involved enjoyed the experience.

Jenny is also a valued member of the school's Leadership Team and her contributions to developing the vision for her department and the whole school are appreciated. She attended OTHS as a student and lives in the community so she is able to use her local knowledge to provide a unique perspective to help shape the school's direction. Jenny is an incredible professional with a Herculean work effort that will do anything for her school. She is friendly and funny and both staff and students respond very positively to her demeanour.

## Stephanie Steward,

Office Administrator,  
Robert Bateman Public School



For the past 14 years, Stephanie Steward has served the students, parents and staff of the Robert Bateman School Community as Office Administrator.

Robert Bateman is a school that welcomes many families from around the world, and Stephanie ensures that all students and their parents receive a warm welcome, and helps them to navigate the many elements of starting a new school in Canada. She builds strong, trusting relationships with parents and students, which means that she can give support when needed. Sometimes that support is her listening ear and caring heart, and often she is able to start the process of providing support through the Education Foundation, and other organizations - support that might have otherwise gone unaccessed if not for Stephanie's special connection to the needs of the community.

Stephanie is a constant advocate for the families at Robert Bateman. She actively identifies barriers that impact minoritized and underserved students and goes above and beyond in ensuring that those barriers are reduced or eliminated. Two recent examples include working with OSTA to correct a boundary issue that was impacting student attendance, and working as a staff representative on the RBPS School Council to advocate for reviewing activities through an equity lens.

Perhaps most importantly, Stephanie is a steadfast, reassuring presence in our school community. She handles conflicts with patience, greets newcomers with the utmost hospitality, and knows every single student's and parent's name. She provides staff with whatever information or support they need, and is often one step ahead in providing what is needed before staff have to ask. Whether student, staff, or parent, Stephanie does whatever she can to brighten their day, lighten their load, and let them know they are appreciated, and our school is a better place because they are there. She is an outstanding representative of the values of the OCDSB!

## Todd Thompson, Principal, Shingwàkons Public School



Todd Thompson is a one in a million principal. He is equal parts enthusiastic, knowledgeable, compassionate and dedicated. Every day he exemplifies his own motto of "Innovate, Connect, Inspire - Seize the opportunity!" and he uses this motto to support the five pillars of our school: relationships, achievement, leadership, innovation and positivity.

Todd sought the role of opening a new school knowing he would manage two sites throughout the school year if Shingwàkons was not ready. He took the role with enthusiasm and made a difficult situation an amusing adventure for staff and students while ensuring everyone's wellbeing. He worked relentlessly with staff and families to incorporate their ideas into our new school.

Every opportunity is taken to positively interact with students including hallway conversations, story time and words of encouragement. When meeting with parents, he takes the time to fully explain the situation, what we're doing to help, and what support is available. He models "family first" and staff and parents appreciate his philosophy.

Todd is a warm demander. Professional development is always up to date and he has high expectations of the staff. He solicits and appreciates feedback from colleagues and ensures there is clear communication and understanding. He leverages his in-school team to provide the best support to all students.

As a natural mentor, he brings out the best in his staff, sharing the limelight to give staff leadership opportunities and foster collaboration. He knows when to step in and when to step aside. He is also a leader at the board level, representing his superintendency at OPC.

Todd's innovative thinking included technology, timetables and even office furniture and now Shingwàkons is a truly modern school with everything online. This year, he piloted a new support role in our school as a model for the board.

Every staff meeting has an element of fun (dancing, playing ukuleles, making baked potatoes) that is linked to a specific learning goal. With a loud laugh and love of life he brings joy to school every single day.

## DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

### **Amanda Wright,**

**Team Manager, Payroll**



Throughout her tenure, Amanda has consistently demonstrated her unwavering commitment to the well-being and success of her colleagues. She goes above and beyond to ensure that every staff member feels welcomed, valued, and supported within the payroll department. Her approachability, empathy, and willingness to lend a helping hand have created a culture of inclusivity and collaboration that enriches the entire organization.

Amanda's ability to cultivate strong working relationships across all departments has been instrumental in promoting cohesion and teamwork within the OCDSB. She understands the importance of collaboration and actively seeks opportunities to bridge gaps and foster mutual understanding among colleagues. Her diplomatic approach and genuine concern for the perspectives and experiences of others have earned her the respect and admiration of her peers.

During times of crisis, Amanda has displayed remarkable leadership and resourcefulness. Her ability to borrow and second staff members to address urgent staffing needs demonstrates her commitment to finding innovative solutions and supporting her colleagues in times of adversity. Her calm demeanor, strategic thinking, and proactive approach have been invaluable assets in navigating through challenging situations and ensuring the continued level of service expected by employees from their payroll department.

Amanda's exemplary leadership, dedication to fostering positive relationships, and advocacy for her staff make her a deserving recipient of the Director's Citation Award.



*Award Recipients*

# Employee Recognition Awards

The following pages include the names of recipients along with excerpts of the nominations submitted by their colleagues.



# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD

**Emily Gray,**

Teacher, Ridgemont High School



Emily has been a teacher at our school for a few years and develops strong relationships with students across cultural groups in a way that make them feel understood and heard. Emily also develops strong relationships with Admin, learning support staff, the student services team and other educators. This can be true of many educators and what is amazing is how Emily continues to use these relationships to prevent conflict from escalating between students. For example, students feel safe enough to share with her when they are upset by the actions of others and don't know how to deal with it. Emily then shares that with relevant staff who can plan and complete appropriate prevention work. This has positively and significantly contributed to how safe students feel at our high school.

If that was all, it would be enough. It doesn't stop there, though. Emily has also stepped into conflicts as they were happening and was able to contain and de-escalate the situations - all because the students are willing to listen and stop for the caring adult who has always shown them a high degree of respect. This isn't easy work, it is hard work, and it is heart work. And this is why Emily is deserving of the health and safety award.

# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## INNOVATION AWARD

**Elisa Lambert,**

Teacher, John McCrae Secondary School



Elisa deserves this award because she has consistently demonstrated care and dedication for the students both in her classrooms, and in the school community as a whole. This year, Elisa took on the role of LINK coordinator with a vision to revitalize and reimagine what that program could look like. She felt drawn to help develop the leaders of tomorrow by providing a challenging, thought provoking curriculum paired with real life applications of the theoretical concepts. It is in this role that Elisa became aware of another need in our wider community -- the challenges faced by some of our most vulnerable incoming students.

As a result of her drive to support those in need, Elisa envisioned, proposed and is piloting the FLIGHT program (Fostering Learners through Inclusion for a Great Highschool Transition) between our high school and feeder school. This program invites "at-risk" grade 8 students to participate in senior elective classes at JMSS in order to help them establish a positive relationship with the building, staff, and community as well as a sense of self and belonging within that community. This is done in order to facilitate a positive social, psychological, and academic transition to high school in grade 9. Through this program, Elisa is also working collaboratively with our Athletic Leadership classes to provide our high school students a unique opportunity for personal growth and development of key leadership skills. Through this connection, the Leadership classes are incorporating the proven benefits of the SPARK program while deepening the connection of the participating grade 8s to JMSS.

Elisa is able to see a need for change, to consider the needs of not only the students in her classes, but the school community as a whole, and find thoughtful creative ways to support those around her. Her innovation in the creation of the FLIGHT program is just one example of her ability to welcome, challenge, support, set high expectations, and address the varied needs of our students and our school community. While this program is in its fledgling moments and the long term impacts are yet to be seen, the immediate responses have been heartwarming and tremendously positive. I have no doubt that Elisa will continue to use her extraordinary drive and creativity for the betterment of her students, her community and the Board as a whole.

# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## MENTORING AWARD

### Linda Arena-Glenn,

Teacher, Knoxdale Public School



The following quotes were shared from her peers:

"I joined Knoxdale in 2022 to teach in the Autism class. As a new contract teacher in a specialized program, I faced many challenges learning how to best support our students' unique needs. Since day 1, Linda has been a welcoming, calming, and approachable role model for me. Linda respects and celebrates every educator's individuality, leads with compassion, and offers a listening ear and comforting treat when colleagues need validation on a rough day. I have approached Linda countless times to ask questions, seek feedback, review policies, and beyond. I can't imagine facing the mountain of new teacher challenges without Linda's unwavering support and mentorship. On days where I doubt myself, I know that Linda believes in me, and that makes all the difference!"

"I joined Knoxdale in 2021 to start my new role as Primary Special Needs teacher. I was lost in a sea of new faces, and had a very steep learning curve! Luckily I was welcomed by a fantastic special education team led by Linda Arena-Glenn. Linda is a knowledgeable, compassionate leader who supports each person in our team, creating a family-like environment where all voices are heard. Linda took me under her wing, taught me how to use the IEP system, helped me write IEPs and navigate Multi-D meetings, and walked me through the administrative duties of being a PSN teacher. She is an excellent mentor who set me up for success. Linda does this for everyone! As an experienced, trusted leader, Linda leads by example, leads from the heart, and has time for everyone regardless of where they are on their learning journey."

"I've had the pleasure of working with Linda for 14 years. Linda has graciously, patiently mentored me since I was beginning my career. I valued her guidance then, and continue to seek her expertise, as her extensive teaching experience and diverse learning strategies are invaluable. Linda has an open door policy, and welcomes all questions and comments with empathy and positive feedback. Linda is non-judgmental and ensures fellow educators feel validated (even though a question may have been asked previously). Linda is organized and provides staff with the information required to ensure Special Education requests provide the best solutions for students. Linda is not just my mentor, I can safely say that all 60 staff at Knoxdale (admin, teachers, EAs, office staff, ECEs) view Linda as I do; with the utmost respect for her professionalism, generosity, and excellence at her craft."

# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## RONALD K. LYNCH MEMORIAL AWARD

**Lauren Brown,**

Educational Assistant,  
Knoxdale Public School



Lauren is a talented and knowledgeable EA who is devoted to the betterment of the students in her care. She champions student safety and their growth with utmost compassion. She excels in communication and advocacy for special education needs, embracing feedback and offering valuable ideas to enhance our practices. Her collaborative approach and readiness to tackle challenges are commendable.

One of Lauren's greatest contributions to students' educational success is her focused effort in supporting the well-being of one of our students who has met criteria for the ASD specialized program. Her involvement over the last two years has significantly influenced their learning experience and overall progress as learners. Lauren's experience with Autism and ABA approaches has led to meaningful support. She has advocated for specific learning needs, such as working with OT suggestions to create a fine motor program. She has created learning opportunities for students by providing adaptations to their days, such as incorporating alternative work spaces into schedules allowing for various sensory and detailed educational opportunities. Lauren is always looking for learning and socialization opportunities in all learning environments. When watching her with students, it truly is inspiring to see the partnership that has formed between and the progress students have made. Without her specialized attention and continual active teaching, it is believed that students would not be thriving and progressing at the same rate as they have been at school. Communication skills have been fostered by Lauren who has incorporated various techniques to guide them. Lauren goes above and beyond the scope of her role in directly providing them with the opportunity to learn each day. She respects and appreciates the various gifts and capabilities of each student; always approaching the new day with kindness as well as taking the serious responsibility to help students thrive.

She positively impacts all our students. Her dedicated support for students has profoundly enriched their learning experience and fostered a sense of belonging in this community school. Lauren's professionalism and continuous efforts are deeply appreciated.

# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## EXCELLENCE IN EQUITY AWARD

### **Hermina Brutus,**

Teacher, Woodroffe High School



Hermina Brutus is an exemplary champion of inclusive and equitable education principles. First, she is devoted to critical reflection and is skilled at identifying and challenging deeply-held assumptions. Her core talent is her ability to connect with others, and bring meaningful change that enhances working and learning environments. Specifically, Hermina sets high expectations for her students, and utilizes the Thinking Classroom pedagogical approach to challenge students to collaboratively construct concepts rather than consume them passively. Her facilitation of this strategy pushes students to express themselves and draws in diverse viewpoints to class discussion.

As the Department Head of Languages and Science at Woodroffe High School, Hermina endeavored to level the playing field by highlighting marginalized voices and disrupting established power structures. Hermina challenges pre-conceived notions of what a scientist is and how science appears in daily life to benefit students who require diverse entry-points into STEM fields. Hermina has advocated for cross-department teacher timetables such that diverse skill sets can be shared between subject areas. Owing to her influence, special education principles have been drawn into her departments. Hermina welcomes Specialized Program Class students into her classes and supports their academic inclusion in mainstream classroom activities and social inclusion in the greater school community.

Hermina also facilitated the AY Jackson SS Challenging Conversations initiative, a space for staff to come together and discuss real-life equity and diversity issues plaguing our schools. She continued these difficult conversations at Woodroffe and added immense value in her mentoring of her colleagues.

Overall, Hermina's greatest contribution to equity and inclusion is her modeling of Black Excellence. She is a trusted, caring resource for students who face discrimination, and she is a safe place for staff members who become discouraged by micro and macro aggressions. Despite her own daily clashes with racism, she remains steadfast in her commitment to dismantling stereotypes and advancing racial equity.

# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## EXCELLENCE IN EQUITY AWARD

### Jasmine Doig,

Indigenous Graduation Coach,  
Ottawa Technical Secondary School



Jasmine Doig is exceptionally worthy of the Excellence in Equity Award both for who she is and what she does. Jasmine wholeheartedly serves the students of the OCDSB as an Indigenous Graduation Coach. Thanks to Jasmine's Inuk and Jamaican heritage, her presence in our schools serves a very real need for intersectional representation. Jasmine is an inspirational role model whom staff and students admire. Jasmine works in a challenging role as she strives to support students who are often coping with intergenerational trauma and precarious socio-economic conditions. However, Jasmine's joy, hope, and humour are infectious; the way she brings her whole self to the educational space allows for the school to also more fully welcome, support, and appreciate Indigenous students. Jasmine is a resolute advocate, compassionate champion, and respectful listener who supports Indigenous students with absolute unconditional positive regard. Jasmine's perspective is always equity-centered and her empathy leads to trauma-informed relationships that serve as strong resilience resources for the students and families she serves.

What Jasmine has done and continues to do within the role of Indigenous graduation coach is nothing short of remarkable. First and foremost, Jasmine is the spirit of the Lodge at OTSS. She has created a warm, beautiful, representative space that is a second home for many Indigenous students. The array of learning experiences she has brought to life for students ranges from connecting with elders, knowledge keepers, and artists to trips to MacSkimming, the National Art Centre, and the Rideau Hub. As a result, Indigenous students not only learn about their culture but within it. The students she supports feel like there is a space for them at school and that school can be meaningful thanks to the connections Jasmine forges. As a result, students have earned many credits towards graduation that simply would not have been possible without Jasmine providing the key to unlock their gifts. Recently, Jasmine supported several students as they took part in the election of an Indigenous student trustee. The relationships the students forged across the city during this process helped them feel a part of a community. And that is truly Jasmine's gift: bringing students and their families into a community who might otherwise remain marginalized.





*Congratulations!*



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