

AWARD WINNERS



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD
Regina Jennings



ACHIEVEMENT IN EDUCATION AWARD
Dr. Courtney L. Whitehead



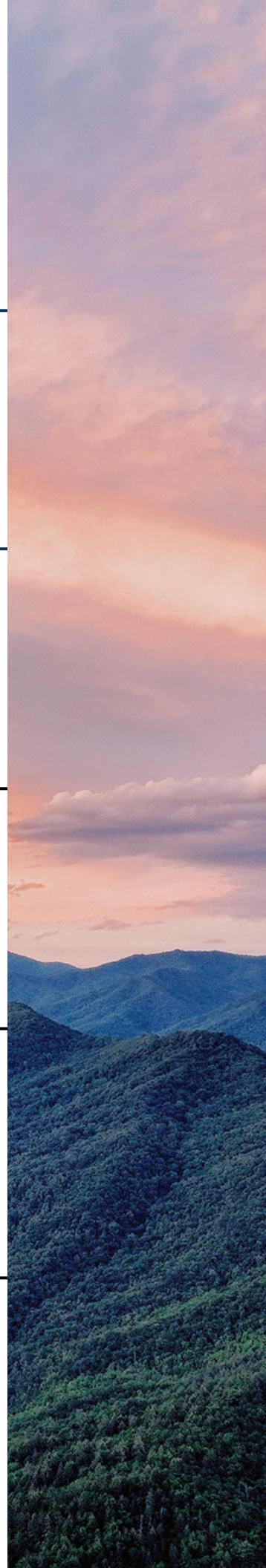
COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD
Shawna McConnell



MILITARY/PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD
Lt. Col. Dustin Merritt



YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD
Logan Cable



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS



In Blount County Schools, we are committed to graduating students equipped to achieve excellence. As an alumni myself from Heritage High School (1993), I know the importance of an outstanding education. A Blount County Schools education allows students the opportunity to choose their own pathway to success.

Our 2024 alumni winners exemplify building relationships with peers, controlling focus on the things that truly matter, and sowing seeds of opportunity in the community.

It is an honor to recognize outstanding Blount County Schools alumni. I celebrate with them and encourage you to continue telling your own Blount County Strong success story.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DMurrell".

David C. Murrell
Director of Blount County Schools





Distinguished Alumni Award

Regina Jennings

Regina Jennings

Heritage High School Class of 1981

EDUCATION:

Heritage High School 1981

Pellissippi State Community College 1983

- Associate Degree in Marketing

Tusculum College 2000

- Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Management

PROFESSIONAL:

Senior Vice President and Financial Advisor
with Pinnacle Financial Partners

- Specializing in Small Business and Commercial Lending

PERSONAL:

Married 32 years to Roger Jennings

Proud mother to:

- son, Ben Stone
- bonus son, Kevin Chadd Jennings
- bonus daughter, Tiffany O'Connor

Members of Maryville Church of Christ for 50 years

FUN FACTS:

Regina and her husband have a thirteen-acre farm where they raise beef cattle, chickens, and sometimes pigs. She loves to travel, camp, hike, or do anything outdoors. She especially loves the beach and the mountains.

ADVICE FOR BCS STUDENTS:

My advice to you would be to “live life to the fullest.” You get one shot, so take it. I went to Pellissippi State after high school to get an Associate Degree based on the urging of my mom. Little did I know that I would join the Air National Guard four years after getting my degree. Due to having this degree, I was able to enter Basic as an Airman 1st Class which meant more pay. I wouldn't change this experience for anything.

Learn all you can learn. Listen before you speak. Give grace to one another. These are some of the things that I try to live by.

I volunteer in the community to give back. It allows me to know what is going on, and who is who in business and in the community. Be involved!

Don't expect others to step in and do something if you don't do it. Go ahead and do things first and lead the way. That is a life lesson that my dad taught me. He would say, “You don't have to be told everything to do - just look around, see what needs to be done and just do it!” When you do this, you will get ahead in life, and it will help your career excel! I know you can do it!

Achievement in Education Award

Dr. Courtney L. Whitehead

William Blount High School
Class of 1997

EDUCATION:

Maryville College 2000

- Bachelor of Arts in Child Development with teacher licensure
- Magna Cum Laude; Bonner Scholar

Tennessee Tech University 2002

- Master of Arts in Instructional Leadership
- Magna Cum Laude

Tennessee Tech University 2004

- Educational Specialist in Instructional Leadership
- Magna Cum Laude

Carson-Newman University 2016

- Doctorate in Administrative Leadership

PROFESSIONAL:

Supervisor of Human Resources, Blount County Schools

Maryville College, Adjunct Professor

Carpenters Elementary School, Principal

Carpenters Middle School, Teacher, English

Department Chair, and Assistant Principal

PERSONAL:

Married to Matthew Whitehead, WBHS class of 1992

Proud mother to Braxton Whitehead,
WBHS class of 2023

Daughter of Roy and Teresa Lowe

FUN FACTS:

Dr. Whitehead loves to travel with family, read, spend time with her Shorkie and Aussie-Doodle, and work with college students to find their vocation, especially if it involves education.



ADVICE FOR BCS STUDENTS:

I would tell them to push themselves to develop relationships and skills for their future. Being a student in BCS means that you can achieve anything your talent and work ethic will dream. From my first day in Kindergarten at Lanier, to my current role at the district office as the HR supervisor, BCS has always been a dependable, high-quality school system.

Community Service Award

Shawna Williams McConnell

Heritage High School
Class of 1988



EDUCATION:

University of Tennessee, Knoxville 1992

- Bachelor of Science, Special Education: Speech & Hearing concentration

University of Tennessee, Knoxville 1993

- Master of Arts, Speech Language Pathology

PROFESSIONAL:

A Secret Safe Place for Newborns of Tennessee, Inc.

- Co-Founder, Strategic Planning Committee Chair

PERSONAL:

Married 33 years to Tim McConnell

Proud Mother to:

- son, Colton McConnell (Louisville)
- daughter, Graysen McConnell Bloom and husband, Lane Bloom (Knoxville)
- daughter, Peyton McConnell Camera, husband Tyler Camera (Maryville)

Proud Mumsey to:

- grandson, James Camera and baby girl Camera coming in June 2024!

Member of Sevier Heights Baptist Church

FUN FACTS:

Mrs. McConnell loves spending time with her grandbaby. She enjoys tennis, pickleball, reading, bunco, travel, family time at the lake and beach, and living life with my family and friends!

ADVICE FOR BCS STUDENTS:

My advice to students is to follow your heart. I have always told my children that it's our responsibility to leave this place better than we found it. Look around, see the gaps, and find places where YOU can make a difference. It can be in big ways or very small ways, but they are all important and we need people who will use their gifts, talents, and unique insights & skills to step in and step up. The value of serving was passed to me from my family, and it is absolutely true that you get more than you give.

Military Service Award

DUSTIN MERRITT

*Heritage High School
Class of 2004*

EDUCATION:

Heritage High School 2004, Valedictorian

USAF Academy 2008

- Bachelor of Science in Operations Research and Economics

Air and Space Basic Course 2008

Squadron Officer School 2014

- Distinguished Graduate

Naval Postgraduate School 2022

- Master of Science in Applied Design, Innovation in Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict

Naval Command and Staff College with Distinction 2022

PROFESSIONAL:

Director of Operations, 48 Operations Support Squadron at RAF Lakenheath, UK

Current and qualified F35A instructor pilot

Flies with the 493 Fighter Squadron

PERSONAL:

Married 13 years to Teycee Merritt

Proud father of two children, Mykalin, 10 and Colson, 6

FUN FACTS:

Lt. Col. Merritt loves fly fishing, fly tying, camping, RVing, traveling, and golf. His family lived in an Airstream for a total of 2.5 years and a 5th wheel for another 6 months.

ADVICE FOR BCS STUDENTS:

I like the saying that “luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” My dad always told me “Do your best, and the rest will take care of itself.” To me, that translates to setting yourself up for as many opportunities as possible by setting goals and developing processes to achieve the goals. Focus on the process, and see where that takes you; the goals may change as different opportunities arise, but the process has set you up to be prepared for the unexpected opportunities, or as some may say, “lucky”.



Young Alumni Achievement Award

LOGAN CABLE
Heritage High School
Class of 2012

EDUCATION:

Heritage High School 2012

National Center for Construction Education and Research

- Four year apprenticeship program

Board of Certified Safety Professionals credential holder

PROFESSIONAL:

Project Superintendent at Cherokee Millwright

PERSONAL:

Married to wonderful wife Taya

Together they have 9 animals- 4 horses, 2 dogs, and 3 cats

FUN FACTS:

Logan enjoys doing anything rodeo or horse related. He spends his spare time golfing, snowboarding, working on farm projects, and building things.



ADVICE FOR BCS STUDENTS:

Always stay curious and eager to learn. In the industrial construction industry, being adaptable and open-minded can take you far. Don't be afraid to take on challenges and push yourself beyond your comfort zone.

Remember, every experience, whether good or challenging, is an opportunity to grow and improve. Keep that positive attitude, and you will excel in any field you choose to have a career in.

Alumni Awards Criteria

Blount County Schools accepted nominations for outstanding alumni during the months of January and February 2024. Nominations were reviewed by the district communication advisor team, and winners were selected for this great honor in the five categories listed below:

Distinguished Alumni Award (highest honor)

- Accomplished or advancing in his/her chosen field
- Outstanding leadership
- Ongoing supporter of Blount County Schools
- Attended a Blount County high school for 3+ years

Achievement in Education Award

- Teacher or leader at the school level for at least 10 years
- Data reflects strong work ethic and leadership ability
- Attended a Blount County high school for 3+ years

Community Service Award

- Volunteer spirit
- Leader in community service initiatives
- Attended a Blount County high school for 3+ years

Military/Public Service Award

- Service to our nation and/or community
- Outstanding contributions to his/her profession and/or branch of service
- Attended a Blount County high school for 3 + years

Young Alumni Achievement Award (age 35 or younger)

- Accomplished leader
- Demonstrates initiative
- Attended a Blount County high school for 3+ years