

# News U Trust

APPRECIATING, DEVELOPING, AND SUPPORTING SCHOOL STAFF



## Announcing Our New Addition --the G-Force!!

By: Dameron Johnson

appreciation days.

We are excited to introduce a new idea to help your A-Team... The G-Force ("G" is for gratitude).

This new group is designed to work closely with your existing A-Team in promoting the

Each class will have at least one or two members of the G-Force to help promote appreciation days in their class. Each G-Force student relates directly to a designated A-Team member. G-Force responsibilities include making announcements to

their classmates about the appreciation day; encouraging involvement in the preparations; and being responsible for carrying out any other job given to them.

Getting started is simple. The school coordinators and A-Team members choose one student from each classroom to be on the G-Force. An A-Team member will have the responsibility to communicate regularly with them.

Communication and working together are the keys to success and with more students leading, appreciation days will be simpler for everyone.

## UTRUST SAVING MEMBERS MILLIONS By: Kristi Coleman

Being a member of Utrust is one of the best decisions your board has made. Not only do you reap rewards from your participation in the Employee Appreciation Program, but also on the unemployment premiums you pay in each year.

With economic uncertainties and market decline, it can sometimes be very tough to balance the budget without laying off employees. And when a school system lays off employees, unemployment costs jump quickly. That has been especially true during the last few years because

of extended benefits. Most school boards had to pay out far more in unemployment costs than they had budgeted

However, as a member of Utrust, your unemployment expenses never exceed the amount in your budget because Utrust doesn't increase the amount you pay at the beginning of the year. Utrust pays the difference in what member systems pay in premium and actual costs so your budget is not affected during the year. Utrust has paid out over \$1.4 million more in claims than

members have paid in premiums over the past three years.

Our goal has always been to help you control unemployment costs, provide stability for that part of your budget and help school boards appreciate their employees and make their school systems great places for employees to work.



# Tennessee's BEST EAP-- Hawkins County

By: Rachel Lovingood

Congratulations to Hawkins County Schools for being named Tennessee's BEST School Employee Appreciation Program. Dr. Dan Tollett, Utrust Administrator and David Jones, Utrust Board Chairman presented the award to Superintendent Charlotte Britton at the annual Utrust member appreciation dinner.

"Hawkins County has developed Tennessee's best School Employee Appreciation Program. All of their schools are involved and have A-Teams (appreciation teams) leading the implementation of the program," Tollett said. "Other school systems can look to Hawkins County as a shining example of how appreciating employees makes a difference in both the adults and students of the school system and community. We could not be more pleased with the quality participation in Hawkins County as they continue to find ways for their students to demonstrate an attitude of gratitude."

Superintendent Britton had this to say about their recognition, "Our school board has made the commitment to the program. This commitment is extremely important in order to have success with the program. Thanks to Holly Helton and Michael Williams who are present tonight. Also, Kurt Cornett, Burl Smith, Randy Collier, and Debbie Shedden. The board values the importance of every employee. Every position is an important link to the education of the students in Hawkins County."

Britton also gave credit to Nedra Jackson, Director of Personnel who is the system coordinator of the EAP in Hawkins County. Britton further stated that "Ownership of the program has been taken to the school level and a champion at each school leads the A-Team. This has been the element of success for our Employee Appreciation Program."



**Look for Yourself!**



Take a moment to watch the video shot during our member appreciation dinner and see if you can find yourself. Click the [link](#) for video.

## COME ONE, COME ALL TO THE GREATEST FOOD SERVICE APPRECIATION DAY ON EARTH!

By: Kristi Coleman

We are going under the big top to celebrate food service workers with a carnival theme on January 12. So, be sure to go online and check out all of the fun ideas we have suggested as part of your celebrations for the big day.



New in this packet is the "Brightest Star" opportunity. You will see a smiling star designating one idea that can win you a prize. Your school has the chance to win \$100 for the A-Team to use for future appreciation days by implementing this idea in the most creative way. Send us information about how you used the idea along with photos and/or videos and your A-Team could win. For more opportunities to win, be on the lookout for the smiling star in future packets as well.

## JACKSON COUNTY WINS AWARD! By: Rachel Lovingood

Jackson County was honored by Utrust for having an Outstanding Employee Appreciation Program (EAP). understand the importance of every employee in the Jackson County school system.

The school board and Superintendent Joe Barlow received the award at the Annual Utrust Member Appreciation Dinner in Nashville.

"We are very proud of the work done by Jackson County in promoting and implementing the EAP" Tollett said. "Jackson County has set the pace for other school systems to follow.

They have recognized and celebrated school employees in a fun, but sincere manner. Happy employees do a better job." Superintendent Joe Barlow believes that the EAP has increased morale and caused students to better



When asked about the success of the program, Barlow mentioned the value of using the A-Team, which are students who lead in the appreciation activities. He stressed that giving students the opportunity to develop as leaders is invaluable and "what we are in education for in the first place." As students learn to have an attitude of gratitude, employees are honored and everyone benefits.

We hope other school systems are inspired by what Jackson County is doing to recognize and honor its employees, Tollett said.



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## All Aboard for Appreciation!

By: Rachel Lovingood

The 12th Annual Utrust Member Appreciation Dinner gave school board members across the state the chance to set sail on a new wave of appreciation. Guests were greeted by local students dressed in EAP themed outfits as they arrived aboard the General Jackson. The ballroom was elegant and the food was wonderful. All in all the night was festive and a true celebration of how much we value appreciation.

Not only are we grateful for our members but we are also grateful for the way so many have jumped on board with the Employee Appreciation Program. Two counties were recognized as leading out in the EAP. **Hawkins County** won the Tennessee's

BEST EAP and **Jackson County** was given the Outstanding EAP award. They have both been pioneers in the program and have helped to raise the bar on appreciation across the state.

**Johnson County** was recognized as being the first Five Star Board in the state. It is our hope and expectation that other boards will follow in reaching for this distinction that will be a catalyst for improving our boards and our schools in Tennessee.

Everyone enjoyed the dinner, the program, the fellowship and the giveaways. We appreciate the students who came and participated so enthusiastically to help each person get a feel for what it is like to be appreciated. We believe that together we can make the great state of Tennessee not just the volunteer state but the GRATEful volunteer state!



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