

Making a Difference Every Day - Jim Cox

by Anita Christian, Principal
Adult - 2nd place
Watertown Elementary
Wilson County

It takes every school employee both classified and certified to operate an elementary school pre-K through eighth grade each day and help to create that professional learning community for each student to find success. At Watertown Elementary our students are fortunate to have teachers, aides, administrators, office personnel, cafeteria staff, and custodians who care about them. One such employee, Mr. Jim Cox, lead custodian, goes beyond his job description. One month after transitioning from an assistant principal to principal changes were about to take place at the school. A new Pre-K-3 grade school was about to be constructed with a Pre-K class being housed at the nearby church Round Lick Baptist. Two months after the change in the administration due to the former principal retiring, Mr. Jim Cox was hired as a part-time employee on the custodial staff.



Rose Radick, Wilson Co Bd Secretary, Jim Cox, Anita Christian and Dr. Dan Tollett, Utrust Administrator who presented a check for \$500.

Immediately, the school was being noticed for its cleanliness as the hallways shined, classrooms were cleaned daily, and restrooms had a nice fresh scent. Students were noticing, too, as well. The cleanliness of the building was due to Mr. Jim's leadership, and suddenly the students were taking ownership and pride as never before noticed.

Mr. Jim soon changed from part-time status to full-time status and organized one of the best custodial staffs in the county. It was not long until our school was noticed for its "clean learning environment." Mr. Jim and his staff even were asked to make a video, compliments of Custodian Appreciation Week on behalf of Utrust.

When the building was completed in the fall of 2007 and after a summer of extreme labor of helping teachers discard years of accumulation, move items, lift furniture, help order new furniture, and physically move K-3 teachers from classrooms in the 4-5 building to the new building it was evident the "Most Valuable Player" in the move to the new building was Mr. Jim Cox.

With the teachers, Mr. Jim took that extra time needed with each one assuring them the move would go smoothly at which it did. This was a huge undertaking since some of our teachers had kept accumulating materials for years without disposing of outdated materials.

The administrators relied on his helpfulness throughout this change, and noted how Mr. Jim kept such a great attitude and willingness to go beyond in whatever it took to get the job done.

The first year Watertown Elementary was a Pre-K-8 campus Mr. Jim came in early as he always had done unlocking all four gates, all three buildings, re-setting alarms, and going about his usual routine. He commented to the Principal he did not feel well that morning and was going to the doctor. Later that morning the emergency room from the local hospital called the Principal reporting that Mr. Jim had suffered a heart attack and would be transferred to a Nashville Hospital where he would undergo surgery, which he did. All teachers, staff, and students were pulling for him and missed him. The students made cards for him, and the teachers took up money to give him. Both administrators visited him after his surgery, and he was eager to return to work after his recovery. Soon he returned to work and was glad to be back. Often it has been stated, "Mr. Jim came to work, had a heart attack, and drove himself to the hospital!"

Not only does Mr. Jim assure a clean school supervising three buildings, he makes that special bond and connection with the students. He helps daily during K-3 breakfast and lunch talking and interacting with the children. He loves the children, and they love him too.

He attends ballgames often transporting the grill, food, and supplies up the road to the high school where the games are played. Students witness his pride in his job, and how he cares for the students and school.

When programs are scheduled he makes sure his staff knows, helps place a protective cover over the gym floor, and again—goes that extra mile.

Mr. Jim Cox has truly made a difference in the lives of the students and the atmosphere of the school. He has proven a great work ethic and been an example to the staff and students of taking responsibility and completing his daily tasks with a good attitude, pride, and love for the school!

He is truly appreciated everyday at WTES.

Mr. Jim Cox has made a difference in the lives of our students, faculty and staff at Watertown Elementary School.