

Beloved T.C. Building Engineer Named ACPS' First Outstanding Support Staff Member of the Year

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The beloved building engineer at T.C. Williams High School, who mentors students with special needs in his spare time, has been named 2019 ACPS Outstanding Support Staff Member of the Year.

James Harrison became the first ever ACPS employee to receive the recognition, which honors support staff members who exemplify excellence in their work. He was lauded by cheering students who celebrated him with his favorite

music, played by the T.C. marching band, during the surprise announcement on Thursday afternoon.

Harrison was honored for his dedication and commitment to students both inside and outside of school and for his daily work with students with disabilities and those with other challenges, providing them meaningful work experiences to gain workplace readiness skills. Through this work, he has helped students develop skills that will serve them throughout life — passing on his knowledge as well as helping students grow emotionally, physically and socially.

“Mr. Harrison has been going the extra mile for students for the past sixteen years, working with kids, building them up and giving them advice on how to live life to the fullest, so it only seems right that his service to our students and our schools is acknowledged through this award. We are truly honored to have employees who are as devoted as this,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr.

Harrison is known for greeting each staff member with warm hellos and hugs. He’s described as the glue that keeps the school together and running. On one occasion he even went underground to rescue a student’s keys.

Over the past 16 years that he has worked for ACPS he has donned the halls of Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology, Jefferson-Houston PreK-8 IB School, George Washington Middle School and now T.C. Williams High School, exceeding not only building needs, but the needs of all of those inside — especially the students.



“Mr. Harrison is one of the most humble and honest employees I know. He works each and every day with a smile that infects everyone he sees. His kind manner in which he interacts with students and staff is commendable. And, he never expects or feels deserving of praise.” — Peter Balas, Principal of T.C. Williams High School.

“I can say without hesitation that he is the hardest working, kindest, most-respected co-worker that I’ve ever had. And, he is always smiling. He’s always ready to say a kind word to students and staff when he senses they need it.” — Assistant to the Principal Patty Moran

“Mr. Harrison is incredibly approachable, always cheerful, and has been a positive role model for our team. He has shown genuine interest in our work and is always happy to give us a hand. Whenever we encounter any problems or difficulties with our space or equipment, we always feel confident turning to Mr. Harrison.” — Titan Robotics

“To project an aura of ease and kindness while consistently performing the stressful tasks his job demands is nothing short of amazing. In my eleven years of knowing this man, I have asked a lot of him, but he never makes you feel like you asked for anything at all. This is a lost art. He is truly brimming with goodness that cannot help but seep out and leave its effect on everyone who is lucky enough to cross his path. It is thanks to Mr. Harrison that some of our students who might not otherwise experience acceptance and success get opportunities to have a sense of accomplishment and belonging in their schoolhouse.” — English Teacher Erik Perini

“Here are some of the things I learned by working with Mr. Harrison:

- *Have RESPECT for others.*
- *To be TRUTHFUL.*
- *Have MANNERS always.*
- *To FOLLOW THROUGH on things.*
- *TAKE MY TIME when doing things so I do a great job.*

Mr. Harrison always keeps it 100, which means he keeps it REAL.” — T.C. Williams student

“Mr. Harrison is a great man to work with. He teaches us the right thing to do and he helps a lot of people that need help. He’s very nice and generous.” — T.C. Williams student

“His strength is the ability to continually walk the line between being friendly, engaging, and building trust-based relationships with everyone he encounters. Mr. Harrison truly lives the ACPS vision of every student succeeds. He recognizes every student is different and he is able to help them grow in a way that works.” — Marie and Jeff Zack, parents

“When he speaks of these students with challenges, he speaks with compassion, understanding and optimism. For these students, Mr. Harrison is an adult who sees the good in them, listens to them, builds positive relationships with them and seeks to help them make better choices. For many of them, he is the strong role model they are otherwise lacking, and those in our profession know that this can make all the difference.” — English Teacher Jill Divan

“He is a hardworking man. He’s very kind to others. If we do not know how to do something, he will show us step by step. I have worked with Mr. Harrison this year and love every minute of it. Not only does he help me in school, but he teaches me how to be a good hardworking man outside of school.” — T.C. Williams student