THE BETTY ROBINS VOLUNTEER-OF-THE-YEAR AWARD ENTRY
2014-2015

CHAPTER NAME: Junior Auxiliary of Columbia, TN

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REGION: II

NAME OF VOLUNTEER NOMINEE: Regina Peery
Lailah Gifty Akita says, “Whenever you get an opportunity to serve, serve with all your heart”. This quote is the epitome of JA of Columbia, Tennessee Life Member Regina Peery. Regina was born in the small town of Culleoka, Tennessee but has spread her service across the state.

Regina first joined JA in 2002. While an active member of JA of Columbia, Regina had a variety of important roles. She was the recording secretary for the chapter for one year. For three years of her active service she was the grounds chair for our Chili Cook-off fundraiser. She was the co-chair of Maury Magic Riders, which provided assistance for an equine assisted therapy for children with disabilities. She also served as the co-chair of our KDS project, which planned and worked monthly on an activity with mentally disabled girls. Regina attended AEC in Memphis and Birmingham during her tenure as an active.

In June of 2003, tragedy struck Regina’s family. Her brother committed suicide. Regina went to the next chapter meeting to quit, but with the love and support of her JA sisters she decided to stay. Thankfully Regina decided to stay. After hearing someone talk about suicide and its effects, Regina began to think of a way to educate others so that hopefully they would never have to experience the tragedy of suicide. After speaking with her father about her idea, the JA of Columbia project Cowboy-Up was born. Cowboy-Up is a program of suicide awareness and education. Since 2005, this program has been presented to thousands of people. Regina worked with the Jason Foundation and TSPN to develop a program for people 12 and older. Regina along with her committee presented her idea to the Maury County BOE. After the presentation, the Cowboy-Up Program began to be delivered to every 7th grader in Maury County Public Schools. Regina and her JA sisters also began to speak at a variety of community events. They have even traveled to Gatlinburg to present at the statewide SRO Convention. Ten years later Cowboy-Up continues to flourish under JA and Regina’s tutelage.
Regina continues to serve her community since becoming a life member of Junior Auxiliary. She is still active in Cowboy-Up, the project she started. Regina teaches Kindergarten at McDowell Elementary and is the Lead Mentor for new teachers in the school system. This year Regina was named the South Central Region's Tennessee Teacher of the Year. She is currently competing with eight teachers across the state of Tennessee for Tennessee Teacher of the Year. She is an active member of a suicide support group at our local hospital. She recently began volunteering on Wednesday nights at Riverview Baptist Church where she works with many of the at-risk students that attend the school where she teaches.

JA of Columbia, Maury County and the state of Tennessee are fortunate to have Regina as a servant to many. As you can see, she is very deserving of this year's Betty Robbins Volunteer Award.