

# Disney celebrates Disney VoluntEARS of the Year during its 35th anniversary of volunteerism

**LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., June 11, 2018** – From handcrafted crocheted caps to helping teachers shop for school supplies for the upcoming school year, this year’s top Disney VoluntEARS contributed thousands of hours of service—and a whole lot of pixie dust—to Central Florida.

Recipients of the of the Disney VoluntEAR of the Year, VoluntEAR Team of the Year and VoluntEAR Family of the Year Awards were surprised during a special celebration during Disney’s Global Week of Service, a weeklong celebration of volunteerism to commemorate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Disney VoluntEARS. Throughout 2017, Disney VoluntEARS contributed more than 258,000 total volunteer hours, and this year’s Disney VoluntEARS of the Year winners collectively contributed more than 18,800 hours across countless nonprofit organizations.

“Our community has thousands of winners as a result of our Disney VoluntEARS efforts,” said Rena Langley, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs for Walt Disney World Resort, “among them are the countless nonprofit organizations that benefitted from all that service, and the families and individuals served by those organizations.”

## **Introducing Monica Bejarano, Disney VoluntEAR of the Year**

As an individual contributor, Monica Bejarano, Time and Attendance Manager for Experience Integration, contributed more than 255 hours of her time to volunteering in her community, including leading and organizing several VoluntEAR events at A Gift for Teaching, Clean the World and Mustard Seed. She chose to give her grant to A Gift for Teaching, an organization she loves volunteering at because she gets to interact with the teachers who directly benefit from the school supplies, and seeing their faces light up is what makes it all worth it.

“To see the smile on the volunteers you are working with, to see the smiles on the people you are helping, is the best reward anyone could possibility give,” Monica Bejarano said. “Smiles are why I want to continue sharing my time with the community.”

## **Introducing the McDaniel Family, the Disney VoluntEAR Family of the Year**

This year’s VoluntEARS Family of the Year honor went to the McDaniel family, who contributed over 700 hours of service in 2017. Parents Jennifer McDaniel, Sales Hostess at Character Warehouse and husband Jim with 11-year-old Jesse Rose are most passionate about volunteering through the Girl Scouts of the United States of America, where they regularly volunteer and whom they plan to give their grant to. The family also donates their time in leading local Girl Scout troop and actively promoting and supporting STEAM through their volunteerism. “As a family, we choose kindness,” Jennifer McDaniel said. “We are always looking for ways to serve and stay engaged in the community. We’ve impacted more than 1,000 people in the community, and

it's very emotionally rewarding for our entire family.”

### **Introducing the Blanketeers, the Disney VoluntEAR Team of the Year**

The Disney Blanketeers use their personal passion for crocheting, sewing and knitting to handmade items such as hats, blankets and pet toys to package and deliver to the community. Last year, the team sent out more than 8,000 handcrafted items to almost 20 nonprofit organizations. “Together, we can be the change we want to see,” said Sabine Jeunette, Blanketeer member. “As I sit and crochet something new, I picture the child or parent who might receive the item in the future, and it makes it all worth it.”

For decades, Walt Disney World Resort has remained committed to Central Florida, investing in our community in ways that directly improve the lives of Central Floridians who need it the most, helping to strengthen children and families and bring positive, lasting change to the community.