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school counselor

AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2013

VOLUME 50 | NUMBER 4

**MINDY
WILLARD**

**2013
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
OF THE YEAR**

KEEP LEARNING

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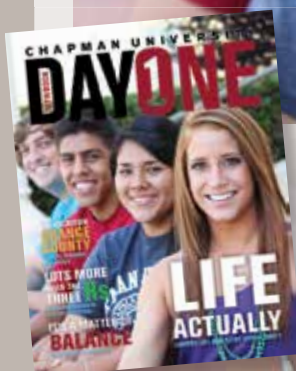
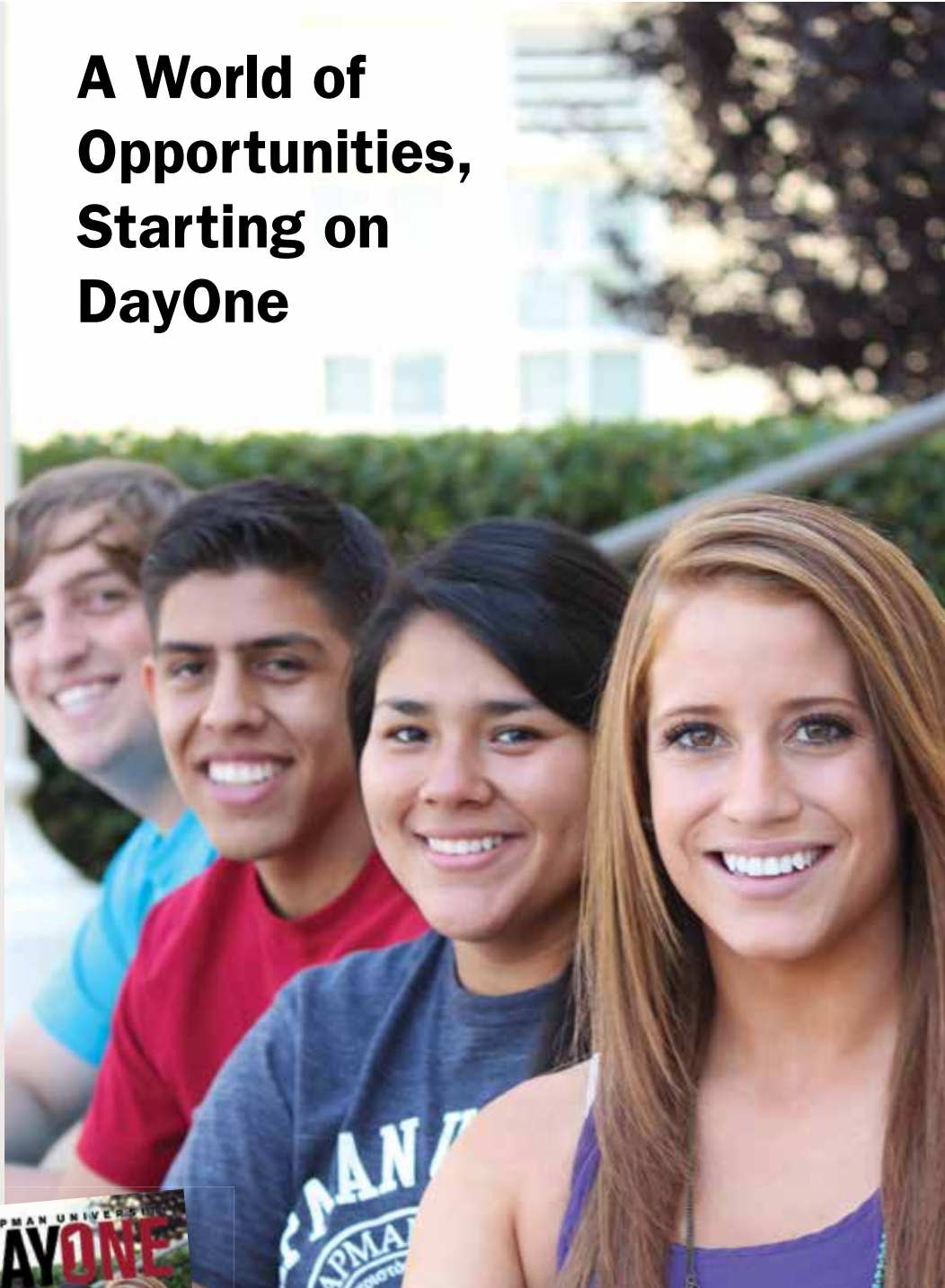
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DREAM ON

When our daughter, Tori, was an undergraduate environmental science major, her passion was energy. She went to countless rallies and meetings to support wind, solar and other forms of renewable energy. She participated in marches, almost got arrested and shaved her head in protest of mountaintop coal removal. My wife and I were certain renewable energy would be her life's work. We were wrong.

Tori had always been interested in sustainability, but her passion gradually shifted from energy to food production. When she announced she was going to work as an intern on an organic coffee farm in Hawaii, we were sure this was just an excuse to live in Hawaii until she went to graduate school. We were wrong again.

We visited her farm and were astonished by what she had learned about organic farming in general and coffee farming in particular. The farmer told us he had never had an intern who was so dedicated to absorbing all the knowledge she could about every phase of farming. Tori probably knows more about coffee than most three-a-day Starbucks customers. And she doesn't even drink coffee.

I was going through some of my old textbooks recently when I rediscovered one of my favorite theorists, Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer of modern adult learning who popularized the concept of andragogy, adult education, as an extension of pedagogy. Through the years, I've distilled Knowles' teachings into five characteristics I call the DREAM principles of adult learning.

Direction: Unlike child and adolescent learners, adults know what we want to learn and why. When I taught high school English, I was often asked, "Why do we have to learn Shakespeare?" You'll

never hear that question in an adult Shakespeare class.

Responsibility: Adults assume responsibility in many roles as workers, parents, volunteers. This responsibility extends to learning. Adults don't need to be reminded to do our homework; we are responsible enough to do what we need to achieve learning.

Experience: Every adult brings a wealth of experience that enriches learning regardless of the subject. In any learning situation, the experiences of each individual participant facilitate not only our own learning but learning for the entire group.

Adaptability: Children and adolescents think they know everything and stubbornly refuse to change. Ironically, they are going through the most volatile periods of change in their lives. Adult learners know that by being open to change, even to beliefs we've held for decades, we can continue to grow throughout our lives.

Motivation: Adults not only have direction in our learning, we are self-directed. Knowles' concept of self-directed learning was influenced by Carl Rogers' theories of person-directed counseling. This personal motivation to learn drives the other four principles.

I sometimes still think of Tori as the little girl just starting to count and learn the alphabet. I have to remind myself she's an adult and not just an adult but a model of adult learning.

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The NCFC is powered by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is conducting a national public service announcement campaign to help those in need procure unbiased college financing information via the NCFC.



POLITICAL ACUMEN: A SKILL FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS

BY CAROLYN STONE, ED.D.

Scenario: You are working with a group of students who clearly need additional supports. Unfortunately, no matter how much you ask administrators and teachers, the students do not receive the help they need. Your principal says he wants to help the students, but instead of providing additional resources, he asks you to keep him informed about every student you see and the presenting problem. He is a strong child advocate and a good administrator, but on this directive you disagree. You have explained your ethical confidentiality imperative. Although he listens intently, he does not relent except to say he will also respect the students' confidences unless there is a compelling reason why he must involve their parents or teachers. You do not believe he means any ill will, but you don't believe he understands your ethical dilemma. Can you legally and ethically refuse to cooperate?

This scenario has become an all-too-familiar outcry. In a December 2012 survey, 1,251 respondents indicated that in the last three years they have been asked an average of 36.5 times by their administrators about the content of their counseling sessions.

Following ethical principles while negotiating political landmines can be challenging for school counselors, as demonstrated in the case of *Woodlock vs. Orange Ulster B.O.C.E.S.* (2006/2008). In this case, a school counselor found herself in conflict with her principal. N.W., a school counselor at a special education center, tried to advocate with her administrators for gym and certified art instructors for her students as indicated on their individualized educational programs. Administration did not respond to her calls and faxes, so she started keeping a log of her attempts and eventually went over her principal's head to the district's pupil services administrator. The principal responded by sending N.W. a letter of reprimand for "going out of process." In what appears to have morphed into a full-blown power struggle, the principal subsequently sent N.W. two disciplinary letters for performance problems, which she contended were unfounded. The principal recommended against N.W. receiving tenure, and N.W. filed a civil rights suit in federal court alleging adverse administration actions that violated her First Amendment freedom of expression.

In deciding if N.W. would get a jury trial, the court concluded that N.W.'s repeated requests for special education compliance was a matter of public concern, and the case moved forward to a jury trial. The school district appealed to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled in favor of the school district and set aside N.W.'s hope for a jury trial (*Woodlock vs. Orange Ulster B.O.C.E.S.*, 2008). The Supreme Court's ruling in *Garcetti vs. Ceballos* (2006) a





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completely separate case, dealt the fatal blow to N.W.'s case. The Supreme Court held in *Garcetti* that First Amendment freedom of expression does not protect statements public employees make pursuant to their official duties, as compared with those they make as citizens on matters of public concern. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that N.W.'s repeated communications were made pursuant to her official duties as a school counselor at the special education satellite center and, therefore, did not fall under her First Amendment rights.

The case shows how legal protection does not necessarily accompany ethical imperatives. The onus is on the politically astute school counselor to minimize the conflict between political compliance and ethical behavior as the option of legal recourse is not a promising one. Negotiating the politics with

administrators can at times be complex or even fruitless work, but adhering to ethical standards requires school counselors to find alternate routes to compromise without going to battle with administrators.

N.W. was trying to be an advocate for her students, but she approached the administration in what resulted in a self-defeating way. School counselors use their best political and collaborative skills to demonstrate respect for the position of authority entrusted to school administrators, while carefully determining the most effective way to adhere to the school counseling profession's obligation to protect and advocate for students.

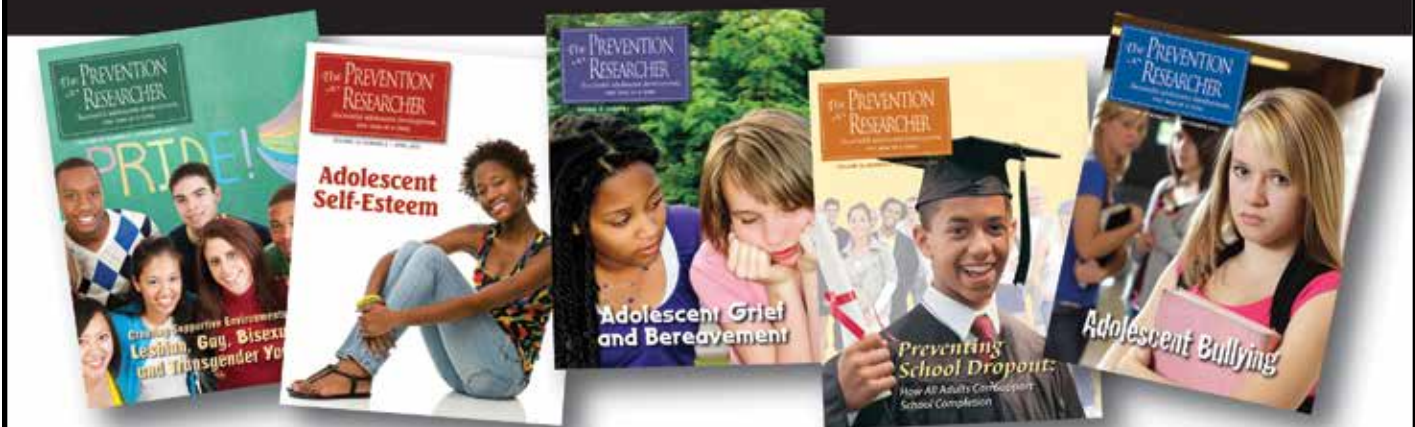
So what is the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this article, "Can you legally and ethically refuse to cooperate?" The balance of power is in the principal's favor, and courts tend to

rule in the favor of school districts when administration and other educators collide in the legal arena. School counselors must engage in both political acumen and legal awareness to effectively advocate. **EC**

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The
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Leaving a trail of paper, puppets and Play Doh in her path, Mindy Willard shares her creativity and energy with the students of Sunset Ridge Elementary School.

BY SANDRA CONRAD

MINDY WILLARD

I'M OBSESSED WITH: Pinterest! I don't know how I ever cooked, cleaned or had a creative thought prior to having Pinterest in my life. It has done wonders for my office organization.

I'M INSPIRED BY: My best friend, Thea. Despite the many obstacles that have invaded her life, she always holds her head high and triumphs as the strong, confident, beautiful woman I have known for the past 25 years. Her grace and unwavering faith inspire me to always push forward.

I'M PROUDEST OF: My husband for putting up with me and all of the time-consuming projects I take on at work and my two-year-old son for loving me unconditionally despite those days when I don't feel like a very good mom.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE IS: Reading celebrity trash magazines when I travel. They alleviate my flight anxiety – or so I have convinced myself.

I WISH I COULD TELL MY 13-YEAR-OLD SELF: "Stop hating yourself for everything you aren't. Start loving yourself for everything that you are." (A quote courtesy of my obsession, Pinterest)

MY STUDENTS THINK I'M CRAZY WHEN I: Teach them to sing to me prior to my guidance lessons. "Look who's here, it's Mrs. Willard, look who's here, it's Mrs. Willard. I wonder what we'll learn today?" I only invite kindergarten through fifth-graders to sing, but each year my sixth-graders ask if they can keep singing as I enter the classroom. My goal is that after six years of singing that song twice a month, my students will never forget their school counselor.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW: I can clog dance. Fancy skirt and all. It's been a while, but if the time were right, I wouldn't be afraid to show off my tapping skills again.

AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAM, WILLARD SEES A DEFINITE IMPROVEMENT IN GIRLS' SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFLICT-RESOLUTION SKILLS.

“My seventh- and eighth-grade girls are able to resolve their conflicts. They’re not having the drama, or if it’s there, they can handle it now.”

As the only school counselor at Sunset Ridge Elementary School in Glendale, Ariz., a K-8 Title 1 school of 650 students, Mindy Willard has, by any standard of measurement, a daunting role. Yet, she seems not to notice. “I am so lucky to have found my dream job,” says Willard, the 2013 School Counselor of the Year. “School counseling is the most amazing profession.”

“Being a quality school counselor on a K-8 Title 1 campus is no small task, but Mindy carries out her daily work with nothing short of expertise, professionalism and grace,” says Carrie Prielipp, Sunset Ridge principal. “She is a superb school counselor. Through her work and her results, she continually demonstrates why school counselors are vital to a school community.”

Described by Prielipp as incredibly creative and intelligent, Willard shows a fierce devotion to her students and the importance of school counseling. “At Sunset Ridge, we believe all children are capable of success. No exceptions,” Willard says. “I utilize standards-based curricula and data to ensure all children are able to grow socially and academically.”

Colleagues are quick to praise Willard’s energy and dedication. “Her enthusiasm for the job is contagious,” says friend and mentor Jill Zitt, school counselor at Amberlea Elementary School in Phoenix, Ariz. “She uses data to drive her program, and as a result, she has developed many innovative interventions to address issues.”

“It shows how much she cares for the development of her students personally and academically,” says Zach Thomason, a district parent. He also notes how others see Willard as a role model and mentor. “Having her leadership and innovative ideas for lesson plans, interventions and advice has made her the go-to professional.”

From Mean to Confident

Over the years, Willard has become known throughout her district and state as an expert in relational aggression issues. Early in her career at Sunset Ridge, it was apparent the school had a relational aggression problem,

particularly with girls exhibiting “mean-girl” behavior. Willard says administrators, teachers and parents were frustrated and at a loss for handling these situations. “I was young, just out of college. And the girl drama, I had no idea what to do about it. It was terrible – the fighting, the arguing, the eye rolling. College did not prepare me for anything like this,” Willard says.

She started doing research and attending conferences and workshops focusing on this type of behavior. Working with Zitt, Willard researched possible intervention strategies. They co-wrote grants to fund and launch Club Ophelia, an afterschool program for seventh- and eighth-grade girls designed to build confidence, self-esteem and positive body image.

In the program, girls participate in activities such as working in a thrift store that helps fund a domestic violence shelter and hosting a fashion show to raise money for the shelter. Willard also brings in successful young women to speak on topics such as eating disorders, domestic violence, gender in the workplace and healthy relationships. “I’ll have them come in and talk to them about what it means to be a strong, confident woman in our society.”

“What I’ve found is that, at the root, it’s always confidence. Whether we’re 40 or 14, if we don’t like ourselves and don’t have confidence in ourselves, we’re going to have relationship problems,” Willard says.

As a result of the program, Willard sees a definite improvement in the girls’ self-esteem and conflict-resolution skills. “My seventh- and eighth-grade girls are able to resolve their conflicts. They’re not having the drama, or if it’s there, they can handle it now.”

The Importance of Advocacy

Willard actively promotes her firmly held belief that school counselors are essential to the academic and social success of all students. This advocacy has become especially important in Arizona, where recent budget cuts have drastically reduced the number of school counselors. “It can be overwhelming,” Willard says. “We are 49th in the nation for worst

ratios.” Although ASCA recommends a ratio of one school counselor per 250 students, the average Arizona ratio is one school counselor per 861 students.

Although she’s the only school counselor at her school, Willard says it could be worse. “This is actually a good situation. Most districts out here do not have one school counselor at each school; they have half-time, if any. We have one school with about 1,300 students and one school counselor.”

Willard recently had the chance to advocate for increased funding for school counselors when she was invited to speak at a press conference given by Chad Campbell, an Arizona state representative who was presenting a plan to double the number of school counselors in Arizona. As president-elect of the Arizona School Counselors Association, Willard spoke on the organization’s behalf.

During the press conference, which was held not long after the Sandy Hook tragedy, Willard spoke about the importance of school counselors, including the school counselor’s role in violence prevention and response to trauma and crisis. She emphasized that school counselors are not only familiar with students, families and staff but also with resources available within their communities to help families cope in the aftermath of a crisis.

“As budgets dwindle and schools face tough decisions, it’s essential that school counselors make it a priority to advocate for their role in student achievement,” Willard says. “Advocacy is instrumental to the advancement of our profession.”

A Step at a Time

In 2005, about a year after she started at Sunset Ridge, Willard began hearing about the ASCA National Model, which had recently been published as the standard for comprehensive school counseling programs.

Willard knew it was something she wanted to incorporate at Sunset Ridge Elementary School. She started small, implementing individual pieces, rather than attempting it all at once. “It’s something you have to ease into,” Willard says.

She also began working diligently with other district school counselors to implement the ASCA National Model districtwide. Zitt says Willard was key in getting the entire district team to move toward implementation of the ASCA National Model.

Willard says that in a time when budgets are being reduced and school counselors are losing jobs, especially in Arizona, she is grateful her district supports school counselors whole-heartedly.

In recent years, her district’s school counseling team received the highest district honor, the Superintendent’s Award of Excellence. And just last year, Willard spearheaded an effort to recognize the school counselors in her district at a school board meeting during National School Counseling Week.

“The school counselors in my district work diligently to ensure our superintendent and governing board members understand the vital role that we play in the lives of our students,” Willard says.

Annually, school counselors in her district present the ASCA National Model to the school board, emphasizing it is the backbone of their school counseling programs. “We discuss how what school counselors do affects not only student grades, attendance and behavior but also their futures. By sharing data with our stakeholders, we gain support for our programs,” Willard says.

As more and more of her comprehensive school counseling program came together, Willard looked to obtaining Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) status as her next challenge. She had already received numerous accolades, including the Pendegast School District’s Superintendent’s Award (2009 and 2007), the Arizona Multilevel School Counselor of the Year (2007) and the Pride of Pendegast Award (2004).

She began gathering materials to use when she put together her RAMP application but couldn’t take that last step of compiling and submitting the information. “I had this box under my desk – for three years,” Willard says. “I kept saying, ‘I’m going to RAMP, I’m going to RAMP.’” As the stack of materials grew, and after some good-natured prodding from her boss, she realized

“We are 49th in the nation for worst ratios.”

ALTHOUGH ASCA RECOMMENDS A RATIO OF ONE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PER 250 STUDENTS, THE AVERAGE ARIZONA RATIO IS ONE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PER 861 STUDENTS.

**SO, HOW DOES WILLARD
MANAGE RUNNING A
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
COUNSELING PROGRAM
AS THE ONLY SCHOOL
COUNSELOR IN A LARGE
STUDENT POPULATION?**

“I guess I don’t know any different. I never had it any other way. It’s probably best that I don’t know what it’s like to have help.”

she needed to just dive in. “So, I just decided, I’m going to do this; I’m going to get it done.”

She credits going through the RAMP application process as solidifying her understanding of the ASCA National Model and making her comfortable working with her interns and teaching them the different components. “Honestly, RAMPing made it crystal clear to me,” Willard says. “Now I get it. I understand the ASCA National Model. I know what it means, and I can explain it to other people.”

Looking back on the RAMP process, Willard says receiving the RAMP award in 2011 is her proudest professional achievement and the most rewarding thing she could have done. “It is something I wanted to do for many years but felt too intimidated to tackle.”

A DEPARTMENT OF ONE

So, how does Willard manage running a comprehensive school counseling program as the only school counselor in a large student population? “I guess I don’t know any different. I never had it any other way,” Willard says. “It’s probably best that I don’t know what it’s like to have help.”

Working in her favor is her district’s adoption of the ASCA National Model. “I’m not an administrative assistant. I have nothing to do with testing. I don’t do scheduling. I get to do school counseling.”

To help meet the ongoing demands of her diverse student body, Willard actively seeks out ways to be more efficient in offering school counseling resources, including collaborating with colleagues, building rapport with parents and students, maintaining strong partnerships with teachers and putting mentoring relationships to work.

The efficiencies of collaboration:

Willard relies heavily on collaboration efforts with other school counselors in her district, meeting monthly and talking frequently by the phone. “We work together as a team. We’re constantly collaborating and helping one another.” For example, Willard might prepare lessons for third grade and share them with other third-grade school counselors

in her district, and vice-versa, so they’re not creating everything on their own. “We do a lot of sharing and swapping, which seems to help tremendously.”

In addition to collaborations with other district school counselors, Willard builds connections with high schools, universities and community agencies. Willard also finds collaboration with parents an essential tool in meeting students’ needs. Parents serve on the school counseling advisory council and are invited to all school-counseling-sponsored events. “Teaming up with families is a vital piece of providing a comprehensive approach to a child’s education,” Willard says.

She actively communicates with parents, teachers and students through newsletters, a school counseling website, regular blogs for each grade level and a comprehensive resources list. She also works closely with administration and provides professional development to teachers when needed.

Building rapport: An ongoing challenge is counseling K-8 students, rather than focusing exclusively on elementary school or middle school children. “It definitely makes it harder sometimes because I have to be a jack-of-all-trades,” Willard says. “I have to know the development of 5-14 year olds vs. 5-8 year olds or just middle school.”

She says her ability to multitask helps her jump from one activity to another. “I’d like to say my organization skills help me, but no one I work with would believe that,” Willard says. “I am all over the place and typically leave a trail of papers, puppets and Play Doh behind me.”

Willard says working with K-8 provides variety in her day she wouldn’t have otherwise. “It makes every day different. It shakes things up for me and keeps me on my toes, that’s for sure.”

Rather than focus on the challenges, Willard takes a more philosophical view. “It’s nice to be a full-time school counselor at a K-8 school. I get to watch these kids grow up.” As the only school counselor Sunset Ridge Elementary School has ever had, Willard says she’s had the unique opportunity to build rapport with students since day one. “They

know me, and I know them. I know their families. I think that really helps with the relationship I have with them.”

Willard says her ability to identify with the families she serves enables her to build trust with her students and meet the demands of her job. As a first-generation college student, she understands families who sometimes struggle with helping their children plan their futures, especially the challenges of financial aid planning, scholarships and college applications.

Partners in the classroom: Since Willard has been with her school from its opening, she has been able to develop a strong partnership with the teachers. They know who she is and are comfortable sharing classroom time. “It’s always been me, so they don’t know any different,” Willard says. “They love having me come in.”

“I’ve never had a problem with teachers saying they don’t want me to come in the classroom,” Willard says. Because her district follows the ASCA National Model, teachers understand that school counselors need to spend time in the classroom. “In our district, it’s not, ‘Do you want the school counselor?’ It’s, ‘When do you want us in?’ That’s part of our job.”

“My teachers are phenomenal,” Willard says. “They’re so supportive. My administration is as well. They see that connection between what I’m doing and increasing our students’ achievement.”

At the beginning of each school year, Willard gives teachers a packet of information explaining who she is and what she does. Teachers sign up for classroom times that work best for them. “I get into every classroom twice a month for school counseling curriculum lessons,” Willard says. Willard finds that many of her school’s teachers continue those conversations with students even after she has left the classroom.

The win-win of mentoring: Willard has also found school counseling interns to be a tremendous resource. She regularly works with interns from area colleges. “The interns have been excellent,” Willard says. “They’ve caught on really fast. They’re able to keep up with me and handle my energy.”



In her acceptance speech, Mindy Willard thanked her mentor Jill Zitt for her encouragement and frequent comment of “You can do it. You will do it. Now get to it.”

At the beginning of the internship, Willard usually spends a few weeks having the interns just follow her around. “A lot of school counseling training programs don’t teach lesson planning, so unless they have an education background, they don’t know how to create a lesson plan,” Willard says.

She stresses the importance of the ASCA National Model and how as elementary school counselors they’ll need to spend a lot of their time in the classroom. “Their struggle is classroom management. Again, that’s something we’re not always taught in our counselor education programs.”

Willard enjoys mentoring future school counselors and says mentoring others helps her to be more reflective in her own activities. “It makes me stop and think about what I’m doing. Usually, it’s just go, go, go.”

She also spends a lot of time getting her interns to start thinking about data collection and how it plays a significant role in advocating for their jobs. “The data piece is always hard for school counselors,” Willard says.

“My teachers are phenomenal. They’re so supportive. My administration is as well. They see that connection between what I’m doing and increasing our students’ achievement.”



Richard Wong, Ed.D., ASCA executive director; Carrie Prielipp, principal, Sunset Ridge Elementary School, Glendale, Ariz.; Mindy Willard, 2013 School Counselor of the Year; and Sylinda Banks, Ed.D., chair, ASCA Board of Directors, at the School Counselor of the Year Gala.

SHE STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ASCA NATIONAL MODEL AND HOW AS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS THEY'LL NEED TO SPEND 35 PERCENT TO 45 PERCENT OF THEIR TIME IN THE CLASSROOM.

“Their struggle is classroom management. Again, that’s something we’re not always taught in our counselor education programs.”

Willard speaks from experience. When she first began implementing the ASCA National Model, she had difficulty with the data. “The data piece made no sense to me. None,” Willard says. “That’s where I really had to talk to people who are good at that – and really listen and really learn. And now I talk data all the time.”

Willard advises new school counselors to find a mentor, especially to strengthen areas they want to develop. “Find people who are good at what you want to do,” Willard says. “I think that’s the best way rather than trying to muddle your way through it on your own. Ask questions. And ask for help.”

She points to the strong mentoring relationship she has with Zitt as a great example. “She’s taken me under her wing. She’s always inspired me, pushed me forward and given me confidence to do things.”

Willard also encourages her interns and other school counselors to take leadership and roles beyond the borders of their school. “You have to get outside of your school. You have to make your voice heard.”

Willard also relies on professional development opportunities to further

extend her reach as a school counselor. “The intensity and scope of the problems challenging our profession changes so rapidly, it would be impossible for school counselors to have an impact on students without continual learning,” Willard says.

She serves on the Professional Development committee for the Arizona School Counselors Association and regularly attends training seminars, workshops and conferences, including the state conferences and the ASCA national conference. “That’s just phenomenal for professional development and getting to see what’s going on around the country,” Willard says. “The collaboration and networking experiences at this conference are second-to-none. Willard says she leaves the annual conference renewed and excited about the possibilities for school counselors.

As Willard looks to the future, she finds inspiration in her students and her desire to continue improving her school counseling program. “I’m constantly motivated by the dynamic needs of my students,” Willard says. “I am motivated to do the best job I can at providing them what they need.”

Sandra Conrad is a freelance writer who often writes about the School Counselors of the Year.

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A Stellar Class of School Counselors

People would be surprised to know...

Now in its sixth year, the ASCA School Counselor of the Year Program honored five outstanding school counselors – people who are truly making a difference in students' lives. This year's winner, Mindy Willard, and the four finalists impressed the selection committee with their commitment to the cause, their passion for the profession and their desire to make a difference.

During three days in late January, these five school counselors, their principals and their state school counseling association presidents took their message to the streets of Washington, D.C. – meeting with senators, the Department of Education and sharing their success stories in a congressional briefing. The event concluded with a black-tie gala at historic Union Station honoring these superlative school counselors.

Learn more about the School Counselor of the Year program and this year's recipients at www.schoolcounselor.org/scoy.

I can clog dance. Fancy skirt and all. It's been a while, but if the time were right, I wouldn't be afraid to show off my tapping skills again.



I have run 10 marathons, including the Boston Marathon.



I traveled to Nashville, Tenn., twice before the age of 12 to sing on two music albums, which we recorded in a big music studio.



I consider myself a shy person and struggle to put myself out there when meeting new people.



I can play the piano.





**Holt Elementary School
Clearfield, Utah**

KATRINA BEDDES

I'M OBSESSED WITH: Surfing the Internet and looking at Pinterest, counseling blogs and the ASCA SCENE on my iPad.

I'M INSPIRED BY: the teachers and staff members of Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

I'M PROUDEST OF: Times when I take a risk. I've always wanted to travel, but I'm overwhelmed with the fear of getting lost in an unfamiliar place. When I came to Washington, D.C., for the School Counselor of the Year finalist interview, I had a few hours to spare before my flight left. I took the risk and rode the Metro down to the National Mall by myself. The only problem I had was when the machine ate my ticket, and I had to jump the entry rails to get out of the Metro and into the airport.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE IS: Leaving my office on Friday planning time to go plan in a kindergarten classroom with all of the kindergarten teachers.

I WISH I COULD TELL MY 13-YEAR-OLD SELF: Everything is easier if you believe in yourself and your potential and that your true friends treat you with respect and see the same potential in you.

MY STUDENTS THINK I'M CRAZY WHEN: I dance around and sing once the students meet the class objective.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW: I consider myself a shy person and struggle to put myself out there when meeting new people.



**Lincoln Northeast High School
Lincoln, Neb.**

RUTH LOHMEYER

I'M OBSESSED WITH: Making a difference in my students' lives, in my school and in my neighborhood.

I'M INSPIRED BY: The at-risk students at my school who daily overcome adversity and are "living above their circumstances," striving to graduate from high school and attend college.

I'M PROUDEST OF: And most thankful for my husband of 25 years and our two college-aged children who have grown into mature, responsible, giving adults with strong faiths, confidence in their futures and a purpose for their lives.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE IS: My evening dish of ice cream with a dollop of peanut butter.

I WISH I COULD TELL MY 13-YEAR-OLD SELF: "It is what it is but will become what I make it."

MY STUDENTS THINK I'M CRAZY: When they hear me laugh.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW: I have run 10 marathons, including the Boston Marathon.

**Loyalsock Valley Elementary
School, Montoursville, Pa.**

ALICE WEILER

I'M OBSESSED WITH: Replaying the events of my day in my head for things that I could have improved upon. This usually happens from 4 a.m.-5 a.m. when I am most in need of my precious sleep.

I'M INSPIRED BY: The beauty of nature and being outdoors. It is often during my hikes up mountains and walks in the woods when I get some of my best ideas for helping my students.

I'M PROUDEST OF: The career path I have chosen and the good I hope I've done for those with whom I've had the good fortune to encounter.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE IS: Losing myself in my music by spreading out my songs, strumming my guitar and singing for my audience, which is usually my cat.

I WISH I COULD TELL MY 13-YEAR-OLD SELF: Pick good friends. Don't scream unless there's a fire. Always write a handwritten thank you note. Call your loved ones whenever you think of them; you never know when it might be the last time to talk. Always eat breakfast. Don't go to bed with wet hair. Be kinder than necessary. Have the courage to work out your differences with others. Don't ever let anyone kill your dreams. Enjoy the precious present. Always pay-it-forward. Be grateful. Smile.

MY STUDENTS THINK I'M CRAZY WHEN I: Volunteer to be in their skits when they are in fourth grade and they act out their dream careers. Roles I've played include cats and dogs at the veterinarian's office and criminals put in handcuffs by the police. I've even posed for photographers and had my portrait painted by artists. It's always great fun.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW: I traveled to Nashville, Tenn., twice before the age of 12 to sing on two music albums, which we recorded in a big music studio.



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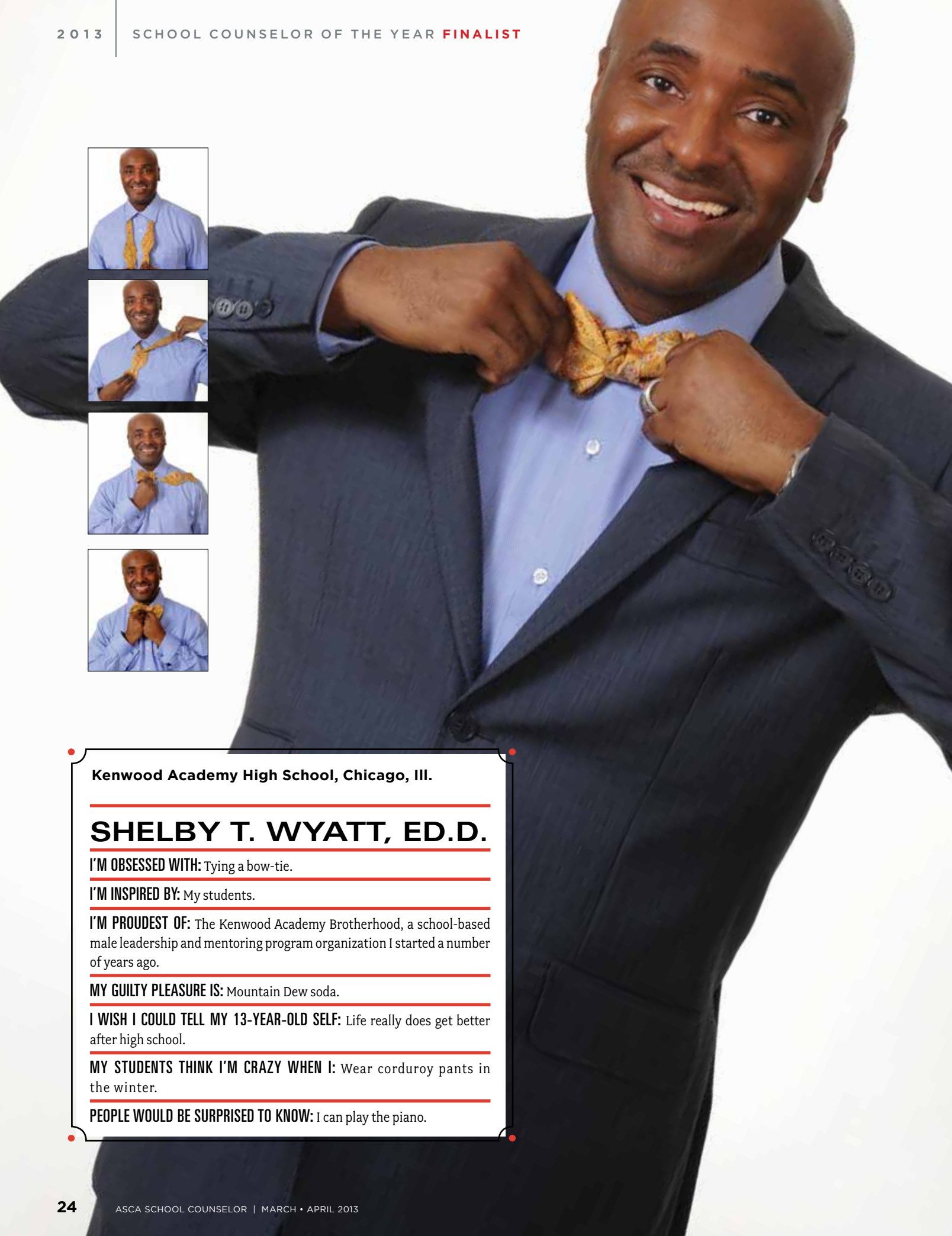
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Kenwood Academy High School, Chicago, Ill.

SHELBY T. WYATT, ED.D.

I'M OBSESSED WITH: Tying a bow-tie.

I'M INSPIRED BY: My students.

I'M PROUDEST OF: The Kenwood Academy Brotherhood, a school-based male leadership and mentoring program organization I started a number of years ago.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE IS: Mountain Dew soda.

I WISH I COULD TELL MY 13-YEAR-OLD SELF: Life really does get better after high school.

MY STUDENTS THINK I'M CRAZY WHEN I: Wear corduroy pants in the winter.

PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW: I can play the piano.

Do you know me?



I am interested in medicine.
I eat organically.
I am health conscious.
I “went green” before it was a trend.
I am a healer at heart.



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MEANT

for

MENTORS

The background of the page features a stylized profile of a person's head, facing right. The profile is filled with a gradient of colors: dark blue on the left, transitioning to light blue and then yellow on the right. The text is placed within the dark blue area of the profile.

What turns a brand-new school counselor into a confident, effective educator? In many cases, mentors.

As a new school counselor, you're probably reveling in the fact that you don't have any more school assignments or professors to deal with. No more exams or textbooks. You can finally get started doing what you've trained to do.

But then reality sets in. Regardless of how good your school counseling degree program was, suddenly being at a school, responsible for anywhere from 200 to 1,000 students, can be an eye-opener. You quickly realize how much you don't know and how different a real job is from an internship or practicum. And if you happen to be the only school counselor at your site, that can make it doubly hard to feel confident you're doing the job correctly.

BY NICOLE PFLEGER

MENTOR

JULIE HARTLINE

Hartline was the 2009 School Counselor of the Year and the catalyst for inspiring me to proceed with my school's Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) application.

MENTOR

KIM KELLEHER

Inspiring is, in one word, the perfect description of my first school counseling mentor, Kim Kelleher.

Here's where mentors can help.

When I graduated and took my first school counseling position, at Nickajack Elementary School in Smyrna, Ga., I was the only full-time school counselor at the school. It would have been easy to become overwhelmed, but thanks to four wonderful mentors, I was able to hit the ground running and continue to evolve as a school counselor on a daily basis.

To say I learned from the best is a huge understatement. Mentorship promotes continuous reflection and growth beyond graduate school into authentic experiences in the field. Learning and implementing change in our profession can be overwhelming. It is extremely helpful to have experienced individuals as mentors to guide and assist us as we learn and grow.

When I finished graduate school and moved back home to Georgia, I knew I would need to find a mentor to guide me through my first year as a practicing school counselor. Little did I know I would find four.

Inspiration and Information

Inspiring is, in one word, the perfect description of my first school counseling mentor, Kim Kelleher. Kelleher is the school counselor at New Hope Elementary School, in Locust Grove, Ga., where she has worked for 22 of her 32 years in the education field. Even after spending more than two decades at the same elementary school, she is always current in her practice, implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, writing grants and always bringing new and innovative ideas to her practice. She radiates positive energy and works tirelessly to do what is best for kids. She never stops.

When I started working in the Cobb County (Ga.) School District, I met Kelleher at a school district meeting, and we immediately hit it off. She took me under her wing and helped me grow into the school counselor I am today. Some of my fondest memories were the mentoring moments we shared walking laps around the school track.

Reflection

“A school counselor who decides to stay isolated will be rehashing the same lessons, struggling with the same concerns and possibly making the same mistakes. But to the school counselor who decides to seek out a positive, nourishing relationship, so much good is possible.”

Anthony Pearson

Kelleher is passionate about promoting healthy habits and her love of the outdoors. We collaborated to implement “Let’s Be Healthy” groups and participated in the implementation of the first annual wellness fair in Cobb County School District. Kelleher applied for and was awarded the USDA Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Grant for New Hope Elementary two years in a row. She used the \$66,000 grant to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables every day for the 750 members of the school family and further promote healthy living. She never stops reinventing her school counseling program.

Kelleher’s son, Ryan, served as a park ranger and on the Search and Rescue Team in Yosemite Valley, Calif., for five years. He was the victim of a tragic accident in January 2012. A winter storm felled a large cedar tree that struck him while he was asleep. He died instantly, two days shy of his 28th birthday.

Ryan’s love of the outdoors started at a young age. As a student at New Hope Elementary School, he created the

New Hope Nature Trail. Following his death, his mother began a Junior Ranger Program in his memory. The mission of the program is to show how nature can both heal and help students to overcome their many challenges. “It’s been an unbelievable and moving experience for everyone,” Kelleher said.

This is merely a snapshot of a woman who knows loss but continues to inspire others. Kelleher finds the strength and courage to continue her work, knowing there are others who struggle. I hope I can become as strong of a mentor to other school counselors as she was to me.

Regular Reflection

During my first year as a practicing school counselor, Anthony Pearson, a school counselor at a neighboring elementary school, mentored me once a week after school. At the time, Pearson was working on his specialist degree, and a class assignment to mentor a new school counselor helped him get his degree and helped me get my feet on the ground. His weekly supervision was a continuation of

MENTOR

ANTHONY PEARSON

His weekly supervision was a continuation of a practice I’d found incredibly valuable in my graduate school experience.

MENTOR

GAIL SMITH

She not only provides invaluable professional learning opportunities but she encourages us to make the most of involvement with professional organizations.



a practice I'd found incredibly valuable in my graduate school experience. It gave me time every week devoted to reflection, feedback and support. Without a mentor and this collaboration I would have felt incredibly isolated as the only school counselor at my school.

"A school counselor who decides to stay isolated will be rehashing the same lessons, struggling with the same concerns and possibly making the same mistakes," Pearson said. "But to the school counselor who decides to seek out a positive, nourishing relationship, so much good is possible."

Another one of my mentors, Gail Smith, school counseling supervisor, Cobb County School District, said "Decisions should not be made in isolation." She practices what she preaches – and helps new school counselors practice that philosophy as well. Smith has been a mentor both to me and Pearson, along with countless other school counselors in our district. She not only provides invaluable professional learning opportunities but she encourages us to make the most of involvement with professional organizations. My involvement in the local

professional organization that Smith suggested led me to yet another outstanding mentor, Julie Hartline. Hartline was the 2009 School Counselor of the Year and the catalyst for inspiring me to proceed with my school's Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) application. She is an advocate across our district for transforming school counseling into data-driven practice.

Finding a Mentor


Networking is a great way to find a mentor, and it gives you an entire group of people you can call on when you need help. Get involved in local school counseling associations, and you'll have opportunities to meet those individuals who serve as role models in your community. "I think you look for individuals who challenge and inspire you," Hartline said. "It is often people you encounter professionally who make you want to be better, to do more."

Once you've found a mentor or two be sure to make the most of the experience. Don't be afraid to ask questions and try new things. "New school counselors need to listen, observe and take everything in

as they experience the diverse role of the school counselor and at the same time share their ideas, take initiative, be innovative and creative," Kelleher said.

Just as relationship building is the foundation of our work with students, it is the foundation of a trusting mentor/mentee relationship. The most effective relationships are ones in which the mentor and mentee have open communication and mutual respect for one another.

"What is most gratifying is to watch someone grow as a school counselor," Hartline said. "When you see that individual experience success, it is an incredible feeling to know that you got to be a part of that."

Learning from great mentors not only helps you improve as a new school counselor but it also teaches you how to be a great mentor for future generations of school counselors later in your career. 

Nicole Pflieger, school counselor, Nickajack Elementary School, Smyrna, Ga., was the 2012 School Counselor of the Year. She can be reached at nicole.pflieger@cobbk12.org.

Challenge

"When you see that individual experience success, it is an incredible feeling to know that you got to be a part of that."

Julie Hartline



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KEEP THE ▶ FIRES BURNING

School counseling can be a demanding profession, and it can be easy to suffer from burnout if you're not careful. Discover how the ASCA National Model can help you keep your passion burning rather than let it burn out.

THE
BIG

BY HEATHER J. SMITH AND LYNNE GUILLOT MILLER, PH.D.

Remember the old tagline for the Army – we do more before 9 a.m. than most people do all day? Perhaps now that the Army no longer uses it, school counselors should adopt it. With student-to-school-counselor ratios often in excess of 1,000-to-1, it's no wonder school counselors are ripe for burnout. The high caseloads and demands upon their time often result in feelings of stress and being overwhelmed and unappreciated. If these negative thoughts and feelings continue, they may lead to school counselor burnout. One way to help address the potential for burnout is by using the ASCA National Model. In addition to the ASCA National Model providing you with a framework for your comprehensive school counseling programs, implementing it may also lead to lower levels of burnout, according to a 2011 *Professional School Counseling* article. There may be several reasons school counselors who implemented the ASCA National Model experienced less burnout than their colleagues who did not. Let's take a look

at a few ways the ASCA National Model can help increase job satisfaction, thus safeguarding against burnout.

ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model includes four themes: leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. These themes can play a key role in preventing burnout. All four themes can provide a sense of self-efficacy and role identity, help you feel pride in your work and limit feelings of burnout. Take the collaboration theme, for example. As you collaborate with other school personnel in a positive manner, you'll build relationships, share the workload and increase the potential for success. The support networks you build with collaborative relationships help ease your burden and have the potential to increase the likelihood for systemic changes. And when you and your colleagues are able to help change policies, imagine how great that will make you feel.

Foundation: The collaboratively developed foundation of a school counseling program has many areas that can help you increase your job satisfaction. By establishing mission and vision statements, you have concrete declarations grounding your work in realistic pictures of your beliefs and providing a future orientation preventing your work from becoming stagnant. It also helps you pass on opportunities that may not align with your program's mission or vision.

The goal-setting and competencies portion of this section can help you show measurable results of program success. And you know what that means – greater recognition and respect from administration.

Management: The management section addresses how school counselors develop, implement and evaluate their programs. Among other things, this section covers the development of annual agreements between school counselors and administration. Developing an annual agreement may be the first step in eliminating inappropriate duties from your workload. An annual agreement provides stability that can help to avert burnout by preventing you from spiraling out of control in a tornado of inappropriate administrative tasks that do little to help you support student achievement.

Delivery: The delivery section is the heart of the school counseling program and allows you to provide actual service to students. School counselors consistently indicate service to students is the most satisfying part of their jobs. By advocating for yourself to provide more time in service and more effective delivery methods to students, you can increase your sense of personal enrichment. More effective delivery may also decrease the negative impact your large caseload can have on your psychological and physical health.

The direct services give you a chance to use your creativity in delivering services to students. You may find unique ways to engage students inside and outside of the office.

By finding ways to interact with students in more informal ways you may reignite your passion and motivation and increase job satisfaction.

Accountability: The accountability section is a key area in showing how students are different as a result of comprehensive school counseling programs. In this section of the ASCA National Model, you analyze and evaluate data about your program and its impact. These actions help you advocate for closing-the-gap activities in needed areas. By analyzing results and reports, you can develop program improvements. This ensures school counselors are committed to improving their programs according to students' needs each year. The program results have the ability to provide a springboard to opening conversations about decreasing inappropriate roles for school counselors, which could lead to burnout.

Overall, the reports generated in this component of the ASCA National Model are the concrete results of school counselors' tireless work and commitment to student achievement. It provides a mechanism for you to show your programs are focused on and potentially having a positive impact on students' needs. By quantifying your work, you'll see results more clearly, which can lead to increased job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation.

In addition to using the ASCA National Model to increase job satisfaction and decrease the potential


for burnout, there are a number of other general tools to use in preventing burnout.

Tips and Techniques

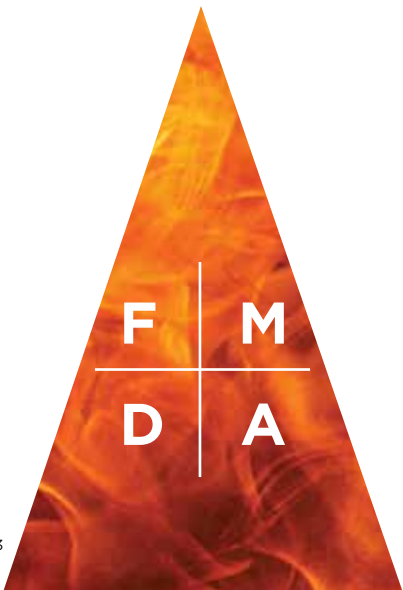
You can limit the impact of stress by knowing and understanding what is causing it in your life. This awareness may help you have a firmer grasp on its effects. It is important to be able to recognize the cognitive and physical symptoms of stress in your body to begin using your coping resources or stress-relieving strategies. By becoming more aware of how your body and mind react to stress, you may be inspired to develop a personal plan for self-care or enhance your current wellness activities.

To develop a wellness plan, take small steps toward positive change. Include strategies in one area of your life (e.g., physical, emotional, cognitive or spiritual) to offset the stress of your job. School counselors may also face emotional challenges (e.g. child abuse, trauma and crisis) they may need time to process personally. At times, the ability to reflect or consult outside of the school environment may help alleviate some of the stress surrounding these situations.

Other general tips for increasing job satisfaction include seeking and embracing the positives each day. Keep a folder of reminders of the students on whom you've had a positive impact. Include regular activities in your life you enjoy. Planning weekend activities such as dinner at a favorite restaurant or engaging in a favorite hobby or sport may aid in supporting wellness. Stay connected with others. Find humor at work and in yourself to also provide job fulfillment.

Using these general tips – and the ASCA National Model – can go a long way toward ensuring you'll be on the top of your game and continue to thrive in your chosen profession for years to come. 

Heather J. Smith, hsmith56@kent.edu, is a doctoral student at Kent State University; contact her for references to this article. Lynne Guillot Miller, Ph.D., lguillot@kent.edu, is an associate professor, Kent State University.



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More experienced school counselors owe it to the profession to share their expertise, thus giving back to the school counseling field.

BY CHRISTY A. CLAPPER, PH.D.

CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE

In June 2012, I retired from my long-time position as a school counselor in a wonderful public school system in a suburb north of Pittsburgh, Pa. I surprised people by what they assumed was a sudden decision. It wasn't. I had decided early in the year that I would be leaving and then committed myself to having the most incredible year ever with my students, and I did. I tried new ideas, worked as hard as ever and went out with a flourish – exactly the way I wanted. Don't misunderstand. I loved the children and the work. It was just time to move on. I knew leaving my job didn't mean also leaving the field. After all, I still had a lot to offer to the school counseling profession. The passion still remained.

So how do long-time school counselors maintain the enthusiasm for the profession throughout their career lifespan? I think the answer lies in the individual. I always have believed this profession attracts those who are called to do it, those who

feel its purpose. School counselors tend to remain in their positions for a long time, and I believe that is because of the incredible passion most of us have for the profession. We have the power to transform the lives of children and their families unlike any other. Sustaining that motivation and passion year after year requires personal integrity, insight, strength, spirituality and self-confidence.

For me it was an additional combination of things that fueled my motivation – appreciating the children each day; valuing the uniqueness of the daily experience; viewing every administrative request or struggle with a student, parent or colleague as an opportunity to bring clarity and peace to each situation. At heart, I am a problem solver, a listener and a caregiver.

My school counseling career spanned K-college, not necessarily in that order, so being flexible and taking on new opportunities as they arose helped



What I learned about myself was validating and satisfying, that as a veteran school counselor, I could continue my professional development and contribute. What a gift in my post-retirement years.

keep me fresh. I was devoted to learning new things, trying new approaches, changing physical locations and grade levels and developing new relationships. My web of connections grew over so many years that when faced with new situations, I had a plethora of experiences to bring to the table and utilize in every experience.

Keeping current meant embracing change and taking promising professional risks throughout my career. The most recent example was when our district decided to develop its own cyber opportunities for students. I tackled the challenge in my last two years in the district to establish the protocols and procedures for this new program. What I learned about myself was validating and satisfying, that as a veteran school counselor, I could continue my professional development and contribute. What a gift in my post-retirement years.

What Now?

Early in our careers we need guidance, support, training and mentorship, but as we progress through the years we become seasoned, knowledgeable practitioners. At this point in our career cycle, we should share or give back to the profession at least in equal part to what we have taken from the profession. If you are an experienced school counselor, approaching retirement or retired, consider the following multiple ways you can give back and stay involved. This certainly isn't an exhaustive list, but it will give you a start on revitalization and inspiration.

Remember your purpose. Recall your reasons for choosing this profession and think about what has kept you in the field. What did you learn along the way? Make a list of things you feel certain you could share with other school counselors. Remember, you are an expert.

Promote your passion. A former colleague converted his passion for helping young parents develop parenting skills into full-time, post-retirement employment in parent education. He even wrote a book on the topic. Another colleague retired from her public school position and became a counselor educator at her alma mater. Yet another, who devoted

her time to visiting hundreds of college campuses, became a personal career coach after she left public education. Whatever you feel most passionate about can become something else later.

Be generous. Chances are you have established and delivered some especially effective curriculum, small groups and other interventions in your time as a school counselor. Freely share your ideas and materials with other school counselors to use or take them on the road to your state or national conference where an even-wider audience may benefit. ASCA's online Resource Center is another great place to share your effective lesson plans. All of us together make all of us better.

Submit an article. Write about your most effective programming ideas. Share what you learned and the outcomes of your efforts in an article. How did your work support the literature or, even better, produce something new?

Teach other school counselors. Many school counselors are qualified to teach in counselor education programs all across the nation. As an experienced school counselor you would have much to offer a novice entering the field. Be open to the idea of teaching a course as an adjunct professor or consider also hosting an intern from a counselor education program.

Volunteer. The strength of any professional organization lies in the engagement of its membership. Run for office for your state organization or ASCA. Volunteer to participate as a member of a board or committee. Assist in the planning or implementation of professional conferences, or present an idea or do a session. Get involved. Let others get to know you, and you get to know others. Connections are powerful advocacy.

Collaborate with others. School counselors don't work in a vacuum. Our work compels us to collaborate with a host of other professionals each day. Teachers, administrators and others have been a crucial part of some of my best work. When an opportunity presents itself to collaborate on an intervention or on designing and implementing an idea, take it. Such opportunities expose the good work of school

counselors to others within the system and then to the broader community. When new ideas are successful, present your successes together at each other's professional conferences. When our district career coordinator and I worked closely for two years to get our district's career education plan off to a roaring start, we were thrilled to share the results – and did it together. This was advocacy for the profession at its best.

Stay connected with professional colleagues. Make yourself available to other school counselors to consult, assist or offer professional advice. My opportunities to do this have revolved around the ASCA National Model and have taken me to many districts in my area. It has been exciting for me to share my experiences with other interested school counselors. It continues to give me an opportunity to advocate for the profession and to help others improve their practice.

Stay connected with your school community. Continue to volunteer on philanthropic committees and within community organizations you served on while working to the degree that you are able. Your expertise will be utilized in ways you may not imagine, and your wisdom will be greatly appreciated.

Say yes. If you are invited to participate in a professional development activity that benefits your colleagues, say yes. This could mean sitting on the editorial board for ASCA's *Professional School Counseling* journal. Or, if you work at a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) school, you could be a reviewer for RAMP applications. It is a wonderful way to lead, to see the good work and ideas of other professionals and to validate their efforts. Your wisdom, experience and critical eye are so important to the professional growth and development of others. It's an opportunity to mentor others and to help them to improve their practice.

Create a publication for others to use. Every school counselor needs new ideas, a new lesson, a new group session or a clever twist on an old idea. When I cleaned out my office, I rediscovered nearly a hundred lessons and ideas I had

implemented over the span of my career. I am looking forward to creating a publication, perhaps even accessible online, for others to use in their practice. Join the ASCA SCENE to share or upload yours.

Be more assertive. School counselors are notoriously bad at self-promotion, yet we do so much to support the children we serve. Many school counselors could be held up as examples for others to emulate. If you are one of those awe-inspiring individuals, don't be afraid to nudge a friend to nominate you for a public award. I was personally humbled by such an experience as a 2010 School Counselor of the Year finalist but was so excited to bring attention to my district and the profession. During my year as a finalist, I found myself in the best position to advocate for all school counselors so everyone I met could understand more fully the value we bring to children's lives. This was the ultimate gift. If you have the chance to do this, go for it.

The challenge to remain fresh throughout one's career and one's life is before all of us. Retiring or nearing retirement simply presents another beginning. Preparing for this exciting new opportunity can give you a new purpose. Giving back, like paying it forward, will foster a spirit of advocacy long into the future. It is indeed my obligation – and my legacy – for the profession. ☐

Christy Clapper, Ph.D., is retired school counselor from Quaker Valley Middle School, Sewickley, Pa. She currently serves as a member of the *Professional School Counseling* editorial board and a RAMP reviewer. She can be reached at christyclapper@gmail.com.



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School counselor interns and new school counselors should focus on safety, role, skills and resources to manage those everyday crises occurring in schools.

COMMON CRISES

The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., shook our nation and our schools to their core. We've heard amazing tales of heroism on the parts of the teachers, administrators and school personnel. Many of us working in schools may wonder how we would cope or respond to such horrific events, while at the same time praying we never find out.

Chances are you'll never face the trauma and terror experienced in Newtown that day. Yet you probably deal with "common crises" every day. For new school counselors or school counselor interns, these everyday crises may cause stress, anxiety, uncertainty and doubt. In working with school-counselors-in-training, I often hear the stories of common crisis during our supervision sessions, and I also hear their fear and self-doubt about how they managed the situation.

"The parent was screaming in another school counselor's face and..."

"The student punched his fist through the door; glass flew everywhere and..."

"The student was obviously drunk or high and..."

"Then the mom smacked her son right in front of me and..."

"She pulled up her sleeve and had fresh cuts all over her arms and..."

I've heard all of these statements, and others like them, from my school counseling students. They always end with the same six words: "I didn't know what to do." As their instructor, I know these students have been trained throughout the program to manage difficult situations. However in moments of panic or uncertainty, some school counselor interns lose sight of how they are trained to help.

Crisis and emergency management are covered in several courses, and it is also a discussion topic during internship. I ask students to research any crisis and emergency management plans in place at their site and report back to class. Some interns are surprised to learn some schools don't have formal plans beyond fire and emergency evacuation drills. During the discussion, a slight panic ensues among students as to what they would do if they were at a site without a plan during a crisis. Although I certainly advocate for emergency planning, preparation and training in all schools, I also emphasize to my students that they possess skills to manage many individual, common crises that may arise.

In a critical emergency or tense situation, new school counselors and interns may second guess their skills more than experienced school counselors. Despite all of their training and education, information they learned in a didactic setting as opposed to a clinical setting may be temporarily misplaced when confronted with a difficult, challenging, dangerous or even uncomfortable situation.

I give my students an easy mnemonic device – **SRSR** – to help them focus when faced with challenges on site. SRSR stands for safety, role, skills and resources.

BY HEATHER C. ROBERTSON, PH.D.

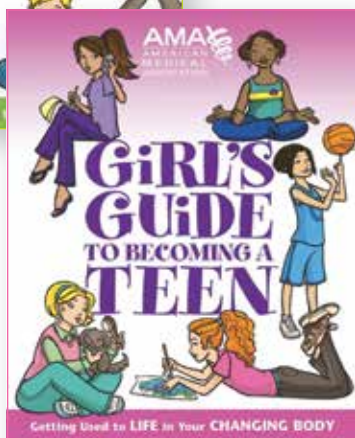
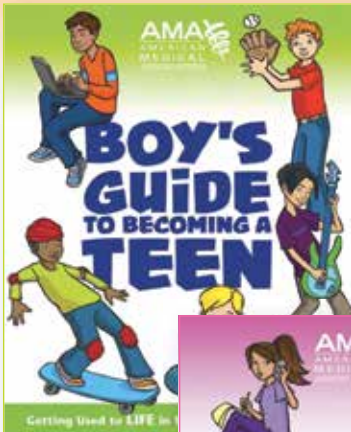


SAFETY

Assessing safety is the first step to take when faced with new, uncertain or potentially dangerous situations. You should assess the safety of the individual you're working with as well as your personal safety and that of others. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is this person in danger of hurting him- or herself or someone else?
- Does the person need medical attention?
- Are other people in danger or in need of attention?
- Am I safe? Do I feel safe in this situation?
- Do I need assistance to maintain a safe environment?
- Do I need to notify others about this situation for safety purposes?

There are many factors to consider when assessing for safety, but it is important to remember to assess for safety before beginning to counsel a student or even going to get help. If you have adequately assessed the situation to the best of your ability, you will be better able to report to others (e.g. school security, protective services, administration) if additional supports are needed. This assessment will also be helpful if you need to document or report the situation.



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ROLE

Next, determine if the situation is within the scope of a school counselor's role. This reminder is in no way intended to promote the "it's not my job" philosophy but to remind you to only act within your professional competence. School counselor interns should not attempt to resolve issues beyond their scope of professional practice. School counselors may find themselves addressing issues involving substance abuse, parenting, marital relationships or other specialties that may be beyond their role and competence. Be certain any action you take while working with students, parents or school personnel is always within the professional role of a school counselor. A student using drugs during school may need services from a substance abuse counselor, school social worker or even medical personnel. Don't try to take on the roles of others, such as a dean or principal. Interns sometimes make the mistake of thinking they can and should help all students with all problems. Competent school counselors assess each situation and respond within their professional role and ethical competence.



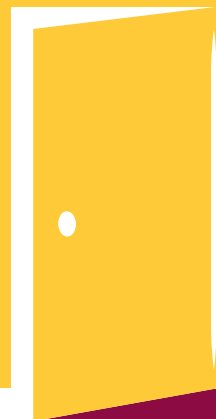
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R

RESOURCES

Finally, use the wealth of resources you have at your disposal. Beyond your own skills, there are several professional resources located within the school, such as the school counseling supervisor, teachers, other school counselors, administrators, school security, social workers, nurses and psychologists. When appropriate, and within the limits of school policy, you can also use community resources, such as calling child protective services, 911, medical personnel, fire departments and law enforcement.

One of the greatest resources school counselor interns and new hires have is their initiative to ask questions and research crisis/emergency policies when they begin their internship or job. You can ask questions about previous emergency situations and how they were managed. You can inquire about any potential emergency issues that may be common in the school, such as self-mutilation, suicidal ideation, on-campus drug use or fighting. Once you have an understanding of which potential issues may arise, ask questions about how the issue has been or would be addressed. Also research the issue or perhaps focus on that issue for an assignment in one of your graduate courses.

Finally, if you encounter a traumatic event or crisis on campus, such as the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, a valuable resource is to assess and evaluate your own response to that issue as well as the school's response. We can learn a great deal about how to manage crisis by studying the impact of other crisis situations. By studying the events of Columbine High School in 1999; Sept. 11, 2001; and Virginia Tech in 2007, we changed how we respond to threats in schools, colleges and our nation. Thus, if and when an emergency situation occurs in a school setting, all school personnel should come together to evaluate how well they responded to the situation, including both the strengths and areas of improvement.

S

SKILLS


New school counselors and school counselor interns have mastered a variety of counseling skills and techniques to draw upon in crisis situations. New school counselors are sometimes overwhelmed by the systems to be learned, such as attendance, electronic logs and transcripts. Because every school is different, interns are not often exposed to these systems in their graduate program until practicum or internship. Interns spend time learning the logistical and operational systems at one internship site, only to go to a second internship site the following semester and learn another system. School counselor interns may tend to focus on what they don't know (e.g. operational and logistical systems), which can occasionally cloud both their confidence and their memory of the many skills they possess.

Draw upon your most basic counseling skills, such as attending (i.e. open

body language, reading nonverbal cues), active listening and probing when faced with challenging situations. You can diffuse upset parents by making sure they feel heard, which you can do through listening, reflecting feeling, paraphrasing and summarization. You may also use more advanced skills, such as assessing for lethality, redirecting and gently confronting individual students or parents depending on the situation. Sometimes, you can help by safely removing one of the agitated members and talking to him or her apart from the conflict. In these cases, you'll use your full range of counseling skills, while simultaneously helping provide order to a challenging or chaotic situation.



One of the greatest resources school counselor interns and new hires have is their initiative to ask questions and research crisis/emergency policies when they begin their internship or job.

Although it is prudent to prepare for these events, it is equally important to manage the common crises school counselors face every day in the schools. Seasoned school counselors seem to manage these crises calmly and confidently. For the newly hired school counselors or school counselor interns, who may not be quite as calm, focusing on **SRSR** may help them develop the confidence they need. 

Heather C. Robertson, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at St. John's University in Queens, N.Y. She can be reached at robertsh@stjohns.edu.

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- **Comprehensive School Counseling Programs and Student Achievement Outcomes:** A Comparative Analysis of RAMP vs. Non-RAMP Schools
- **Parental Involvement in Children's Education:** Considerations for School Counselors Working With Latino Immigrant Families
- **School Counselors' Experience With a Summer Group Curriculum for High-potential Children From Low-income Families:** A Qualitative Study

ASCA members can access the flip PDF version using their e-mail address and ASCA password or access the database-driven version using your ASCA username and password. Both are available at www.schoolcounselor.org/psc.



COUNSELING FOR CAREER CHOICE ACT INTRODUCED

ASCA applauds Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK) for introducing the Counseling for Career Choice Act. The bill, S. 282, introduced on Feb. 12, 2013, would provide states funds to create or expand their comprehensive school counseling framework that includes guidance from local school districts, post-secondary schools and programs, and local business and industry.

"This legislation demonstrates Sen. Begich's commitment to increase comprehensive school counseling services in the states and would provide students with post-secondary planning that would meet their needs more effectively," said Richard Wong, Ed.D., ASCA executive director.

States receiving funding under the bill may, in turn, make grants to local school districts or education agencies. Funding can be used to:

- Create quality professional development opportunities for school counselors
- Create statewide systems for providing students with current workforce information
- Establish, improve or coordinate post-secondary opportunities for students
- Hire additional school counselors

For more information, contact Amanda Fitzgerald, afitzgerald@schoolcounselor.org.

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- **Facebook:** You're on Facebook anyway, why not connect with ASCA that way too? "Like" our page to stay in the know.
- **ASCAway:** Are you a fan of podcasts? Are you always looking for something new to listen to on your commute or while working out? Check out ASCAway podcasts, focused on school counseling issues, trends and interviews.
- **LinkedIn:** If LinkedIn is your social networking site of choice, be sure to join the ASCA group. Get access to any of these technology tools via the ASCA home page at www.schoolcounselor.org.

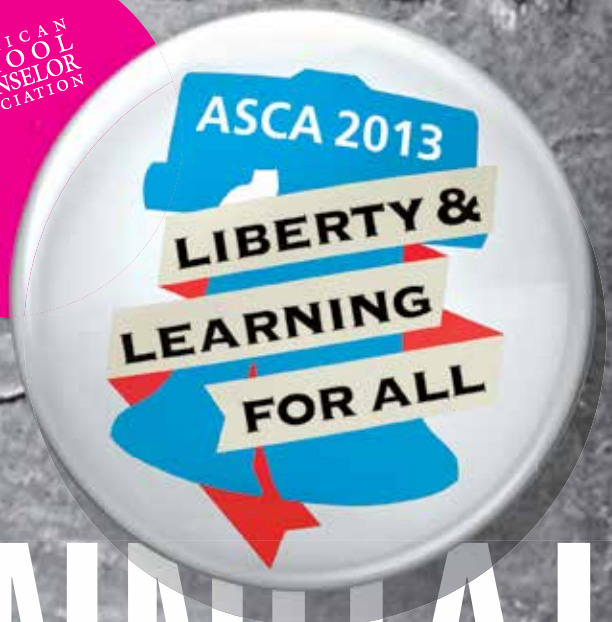
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ASCA ANNUAL CONFERENCE PHILADELPHIA JUNE 30-JULY 3

SCHOOL COUNSELORS ON CAPITOL HILL



One of the most meaningful experiences for the School Counselor of the Year and finalists is the opportunity to meet with their members of Congress to share with these elected officials the importance of school counseling and how school counselors contribute to student success. These meetings with members of Congress and their staff are invaluable in getting the word out about the importance of support for school counseling programs. Mindy Willard, the 2013 School Counselor of the Year, and the four finalists each met with one or both of their senators. The ASCA Board of Directors also attended the Hill meetings and met with many members of Congress and staff as well.

In addition to the meetings with members of Congress, the School Counselor of the Year and finalists also participated in a congressional briefing, School Counselors Fostering a Safe and Supportive School Culture. The briefing was co-sponsored by ASCA, the American Federation of



Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) met with Chris Wahlquist, Ed.D., principal, Holt Elementary School, Clearfield, Utah; and finalist Katrina Beddes, also from Holt Elementary School.

Teachers and the National Education Association. Panelists included Willard; Ron Richards, Ed.D., superintendent, Pendergrast Elementary School District, Ariz.; Shelby T. Wyatt, Ed.D., School Counselor of the Year finalist and school counselor, Kenwood Academy High School, Chicago, Ill.; and Gregory Jones, Ed.D., principal, Kenwood Academy.

CONGRATULATIONS

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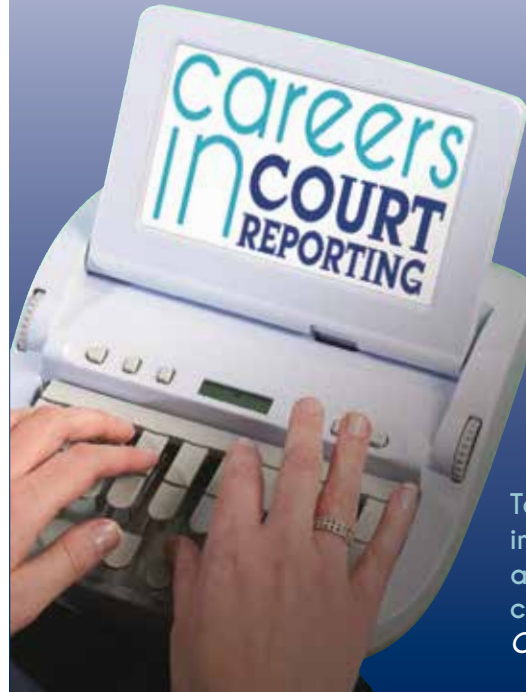
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After a quick tour of the White House in the morning on Feb. 1, the group headed to the Department of Education, where they had an opportunity to meet with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as well as Deb Delisle, assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education.

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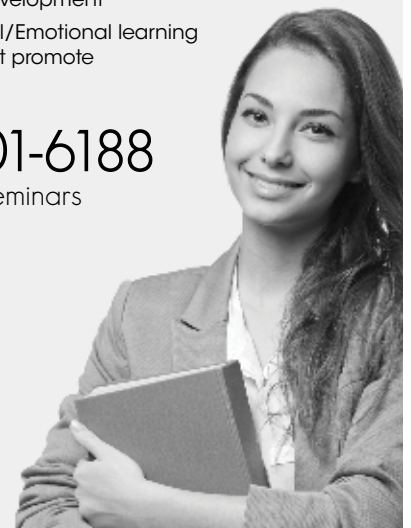


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The program has resulted in critical interventions with students in need, ignited positive dialogue and collaboration among the school community and resulted in establishing or improving referral systems and connections to services within the schools.

Awards include a grant of \$1,000 or \$2,000 depending on the number of schools, innovative educational materials, brochures, evaluation tools



and technical assistance. Application deadline is March 30, 2013. Learn more at <http://www.psychfoundation.org/GrantAndAwards/Grants/TypicalorTroubled.aspx>.

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CALENDAR

APRIL 2013

Alcohol and Drug Awareness Month	2	International Children's Book Day
Child Abuse Prevention Month		National Alcohol Screening Day
Counseling Awareness Month	5	World Health Day
Keep America Beautiful Month		Holocaust Remembrance Day
Mathematics Education Month	7	National Library Week
National Autism Awareness Month	7	Week of the Young Child
National STD Awareness Month		Day of Silence
National Youth Sports Safety Month	14-20	National Volunteer Week
School Library Media Month	14-18	Administrative Professionals Week
Sexual Assault Awareness Month	19	Earth Day
	21-27	Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
	21-27	Global Youth Service Days
	22	TV Turnoff Week
	25	
	26-28	
	30-May 6	

MAY 2013

- Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
- Better Hearing and Speech Month
- Clean Air Month
- Military Appreciation Month
- National Bike Month
- National Mental Health Month
- National Physical Education and Sports Month
- National Foster Care Month
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month
- 6-10 National PTA Teacher Appreciation Week
- 8 Childhood Depression Awareness Day
- 12 National School Nurses Day
- 6-10 National Mental Health Counseling Week
- 8 World Red Cross Day
- 18 Armed Forces Day
- 25 National Missing Children's Day
- 31 World No Tobacco Day



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This year's School Counselor of the Year finalists share what types of professional development they've found most helpful over the years.

Throughout my career, my professional development needs obviously have changed. I taught elementary school before switching over to elementary school counseling, so



I already felt comfortable with teaching and classroom management. Thus, at the beginning of my career as a school counselor, I focused on those areas where I felt less knowledgeable. I spent a lot of time in classes learning about delivering effective groups and individual counseling, as well as building my basic knowledge of grief, stress/anxiety and disabilities. These classes and workshops also let me connect with other school counseling professionals, finding colleagues to collaborate with and more experienced school counselors willing to mentor me.

As my career progressed I was drawn to professional development that would help me with the system support piece at my school, for example learning about positive behavioral support or parenting programs.

Recently I have signed up for professional development focused on my school district priorities or those of the state office of education, such as using technology or engagement strategies, using data or becoming a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) school. Interestingly, much of this professional development comes through alternative methods like reading professional magazines, following the ASCA website, participating in discussion boards and watching webinars. – *Katrina Beddes, Holt Elementary School, Clearfield, Utah*

Because of my interest in career development, for most of my working life I've made it a point to take advantage of graduate coursework in the careers area.



A particularly meaningful course I've taken more than once is a careers class offered at a local college where adults tour more than 20 local companies representing various career fields. Each organization gives an industry tour and spends time answering our questions. This helps me stay current in the career planning field. I've also learned that students are more motivated to perform better in high school and graduate on time when they have a career direction after high school.

The process of our Lincoln Northeast Counseling Center becoming a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) has proved most meaningful and beneficial to me as a school counselor. The resources ASCA provides along with the professional development available at our state and national conferences continue to be helpful. We continue to be more effective and make strides in the academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development of our students because of this ongoing training from ASCA.

– *Ruth Lohmeyer, Lincoln Northeast High School, Lincoln, Neb.*

Early in my career I attended a workshop where the presenter commented on being a school counselor. He said, "Either get good or get out." I have strived to live up to that quote by taking advantage of as many professional development opportunities throughout my 24-year career as possible.



The workshops and courses I've attended on using creative techniques in the school counseling setting have inspired me to design my own innovative tools and strategies for my program. Through the use of original songs, chants, stories, movement and art activities during individual, group and classroom sessions,

I've gained insight into how best to connect with students, especially the hard-to-reach ones. Through these trainings I've also learned how to keep the fun and inherent joy in every day, vital to my positive approach to helping students overcome the barriers impeding their success.

I am truly grateful to the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association and ASCA for providing me with wonderful professional development opportunities and resources through the years, which have served to keep me abreast of state and national trends

– *Alice Weiler, Loyalsock Valley Elementary School, Montoursville, Pa.*

The most influential professional development I have experienced is workshops where the presentation is interactive and involves experiential learning.



I am able to retain knowledge when I can exercise its principles under the watchful eyes of the presenters. I learned about multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner as a school counselor at Sycamore High School in 1997. We were given an intellectual assessment and then rotated at prescribed intervals to learn about our sensory modalities. We learned how to assess our students' strong and weak cognitive abilities and received strategies on how to incorporate the use of multiple intelligences in our daily work.

I also received a rich experience at Kenwood Academy in 2002 when I was selected to participate in a four-week summer seminar sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. I learned how to use the Internet as an educational tool. I studied the historic communities of Chicago. I learned how to create a website to showcase my work.

– *Shelby T. Wyatt, Ed.D., Kenwood Academy High School, Chicago, Ill.*

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