

Bettendorf School Counselor Named Top Six in the Country

Written by Rachel Adams

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NEIL ARMSTRONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR

NAMED AS FINALIST FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR

Shelley Klaas from Bettendorf, Iowa Among Top Six □

Alexandria, VA, January 30, 2012 –Shelley Klaas, a school counselor from Neil Armstrong Elementary School, has been named one of the top six school counselors in America. Klaas is one of more than 270 elementary, middle, and secondary school counselors nationwide who were nominated for the School Counselor of the Year award. The award, which is presented by the American School Counselor Association, honors the professionals who devote their careers to serving as advocates and often lifesavers for the nation's students.

A counselor for 27 years, Klaas is widely regarded as a mentor, a leader and a tireless advocate for children and the counseling profession, not only in her district but across the state of Iowa. Armstrong Elementary has a suburban population of approximately 60% of students live in poverty. After noticing that many students at the school were experiencing hunger as a barrier to learning, Klaas initiated the *Backpacks for Snacks* program. Participating families receive a backpack of nutritious, child-friendly food for their students; often students eat these foods for dinner or on the weekends when school food programs are not available. The program currently serves 81 families and has spread to four other schools within her district.

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Another of Klaas's major accomplishments is the development and implementation of the Bettendorf Community School District Clinical Review Team (CRT). Established on the "it takes a village" concept, each month staff members anonymously present histories of high risk students and families to various local agencies and community groups for assistance with intervention plans. The CRT program is so successful it has been in place for 17 years.

Klaas is a member of both her school and district Leadership Teams and is co-facilitator for the Iowa Department of Education's Counseling Transformational Design Team (TDT). She was also one of the first two counselors in the state of Iowa to receive National Board Certification in School Counseling and has won both the University of Iowa's and Chick-Fil-A's Teacher of the Year awards.

"Everything I do as a school counselor, I learned from Shelley Klaas. I still often ask myself, 'What would Shelley do?'" said Jan Powers, Prairie Crest Elementary School counselor. "Shelley provides mentorship, leadership, inspiration and a tremendous example of what it means to be a professional school counselor."

"Shelley Klaas has a special gift – something that cannot be taught in any classroom or gained by any amount of experience," said Nicky Stevenson of St. John Vianney Church. "Thanks to Shelley our district and community has a leader that knows what kids need to be successful and works tirelessly to achieve it. She is the golden thread that holds us all together."

The School Counselor of the Year awards program was open to the more than 107,000 members of the school counseling profession. The top six school counselors were nominated by their peers and administrators and judged by a select panel to be the "best of the best."

The candidates were judged on several criteria, including: creative school counseling innovations, effective counseling programs, leadership skills, and contributions to student advancement.

"School counselors make significant contributions to the overall well-being of students and their success," said Richard Wong, Executive Director, American School Counselor Association.

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“They have unique qualifications and skills that allow them to address students’ academic achievement, personal/social and career development needs.”

Klaas, along with the other five finalists, will be flown to Washington, D.C., on February 1, 2012, for three days of celebratory events. The honorees will have meetings with their members of Congress, attend a congressional briefing, tour the White House, participate in a briefing at the Office of the Vice President and be formally recognized at a black-tie gala.

Co-chairs of the 2012 School Counselor of the Year program are U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), U.S. Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI – 6th), and U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL – 23rd).

For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, please visit www.schoolcounselor.org

About the American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) professional organization based in Alexandria, VA. ASCA promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of professional school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, personal and social development, and career planning to help today’s students become tomorrow’s productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA currently has a network of 50 state associations and a membership of nearly 30,000 school counseling professionals.

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