



AMERICAN  
SCHOOL  
COUNSELOR  
ASSOCIATION

Contact:  
Cameron Thomas  
(202) 955-5814  
cthomas@voxglobal.com

## **SUNNYSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR NAMED AS FINALIST FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR**

*Marvalee Collins from Olathe, Kansas Among Top Eight*

**Alexandria, VA, January 25, 2010** – Marvalee Collins, a school counselor from Sunnyside Elementary, has been named one of the top eight school counselors in America. Collins is one of more than 250 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.

Collins uses her district's guiding principles of respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, and honesty to set a foundation for lifelong success for her elementary school students. She is an advocate for every child as she works with parents and staff to support their individual needs. Collins has developed a number of initiatives to benefit her students, including BLAST, a six grade leadership and service program, Kids of Character, and "Kindness is Contagious," a school wide initiative to promote kindness. Creating a safe learning environment at Sunnyside is an area of great importance to Collins. After reviewing comprehensive data on her school's safety issues, she collaborated with a team to implement a series of solutions. These tools included character education, mentoring, school-wide discipline, and a bully prevention plan, and have resulted in steady improvement.

"Marvalee is a gift to her students, parents, and staff that she works with," said Kim Urenda, President, Kansas School Counselor Association. "From creating new programs, titles, awards, and celebrations to working to promote school counseling as a comprehensive piece in Kansas, she has proven herself in her hard work, dedication and leadership."

The School Counselor of the Year awards program was open to all 100,000 members of the school counseling profession. The top eight 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.

A counselor for thirteen years and a teacher for twenty six, Collins is a leader in her school and in the field of counseling. She currently serves as an adjunct professor in graduate studies at Mid America Nazarene University and has served on the State Executive Board of the Kansas Counseling Association. Collins is frequently requested as a guest speaker for educators, parents, and community groups and shares her expertise on character education, counseling initiatives, and safe schools with these audiences. One of her greatest achievements has been the creation of an induction and acclimation process for new counselors in her school district.

"School counselors make significant contributions to the overall well-being of students and their success," said Richard Wong, Executive Director, American School Counselor Association. "They have unique qualifications and skills that allow them to address students' academic achievement, personal/social and career development needs."

Collins, along with the other seven finalists, will be flown to Washington, D.C., on January 27, 2010, for three days of celebratory events. The honorees will have meetings with their Members of Congress, attend a Congressional briefing and reception, and be formally recognized at a black-tie gala.

The legislative co-sponsors for the 2010 School Counselor of the Year program are: Senators Lisa Murkowski from Alaska and Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania and Representatives Raul Grijalva from Arizona and Vernon Ehlers from Michigan. The 2010 program is sponsored in part by Naviance, the Universal Technical Institute (UTI), and the American Federation of Teachers.

For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, please visit [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://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 more than 26,000 school counseling professionals.

###