

Maryland School Counselor Association Names 2016 Maryland School Counselor of the Year

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GREENBELT, Md. – The Maryland School Counselor Association (MSCA) has identified the Maryland School Counselor of the Year as Dr. Laura Jones, of Frederick County’s Kemptown Elementary School. Stakeholders from nine counties nominated professional school counselors for their innovative and data-oriented programs that serve all students’ academic, career, and social-emotional developmental needs. Judges representing Maryland’s elementary and secondary school administrators, superintendents, teachers, parents, and school counselors, carefully reviewed the submissions and identified three level-specific school counselor of the year finalists: Dr. Jones, Ruth Travis, and Bianca Pilewski.

Dr. Jones was nominated by her colleague Renata Emery, citing her enthusiasm and leadership at Kemptown. Dr. Jones is well-known for her incorporation of laughter and joy into school (by using a “Daily Laffermation,” for example) to make the school safe for every child to experience education with minimal distractions. Her principal, Kristen Canning, praised her for “Running Chics,” a group for girls to work toward a common goal while dealing with social issues. The 2015 Maryland School Counselor of the Year, Lisa Spera, described Dr. Jones as a “bottle of electricity,” because of the energy she exudes and her enthusiasm for the profession. Dr. Jones helped to reduce her school’s chronic absenteeism and also responded to her community by providing more communication about her comprehensive school counseling program. She also teaches graduate classes in school counseling at Johns Hopkins University and McDaniel College, and has presented at both Frederick County and Maryland School Counselor Association conferences.



Also from Frederick County, Windsor Knolls Middle School’s Ruth Travis is known for implementing “Rachel’s Challenge,” a program to increase student tolerance and improve school culture. One parent gave examples of Ms. Travis’s commitment to going well beyond the call of duty to ensure that her son was safe and stable when the family experienced crisis and instability. Her principal, TC Suter, appreciates her approachability and students-first mentality in everything she does.

Meade High School Counselor Bianca Pilewski was a school counselor and department chair in Baltimore County Public Schools and school counseling director in Baltimore City Public School System before moving to Anne Arundel County Public Schools’ North County High School. She has built a reputation for breaking down barriers to achievement or higher education that exist for English Language Learners, first generation students, or those experiencing poverty. She created a “stable” program to support Meade’s ninth graders who need the greatest level of support to be successful in school.

The Maryland School Counselor Association will formally honor these professionals at its National School Counseling Week gala on February 5 at Martin’s Crosswinds in Greenbelt. At this event, the association will also recognize MSCA Advocate of the Year Alicia Jones (School Counseling Supervisor, Charles County), Principal of the Year Kristen Canning (Kemptown Elementary School, Frederick County), and Graduate Student of the Year Jake Winemiller (McDaniel College). Registration is open until January 26 at <http://www.mscaonline.org/>.

The Maryland School Counselor Association is a professional association that provides opportunities for professional development, networking, and advocacy for the state’s public and private school counselors, as well as school counseling graduate students and counselor educators. School counselors plan and implement a needs-oriented, data-driven comprehensive program using foundation, management, delivery, and accountability components that support all students’ academic, career, and social-emotional development. The Maryland School Counselor of the Year will be nominated for the national School Counselor of the Year, managed by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). National School Counseling Week, February 1-5, 2016, is an annual event to recognize and celebrate the efforts and value of school counselors and the work that school counselors do to support all students.

For more information, please contact MSCA past-president Jeremy Goldman at jgoldman@mscaonline.org.