



## **Robin Zorn Named 2014 School Counselor of the Year**

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**ALEXANDRIA, VA** – Robin Zorn, a school counselor at Dr. M.H. Mason Jr. Elementary School, Duluth, Ga., has been named the 2014 School Counselor of the Year. The award, 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 school counselor since 1999, Zorn is continually looking for new, innovative ideas to support students and teachers and make Dr. M.H. Mason Jr. Elementary School a better place. “She has worked to develop a counseling program at Mason that annually exceeds expectations and serves as an example for her peers in other schools,” said David W. Jones, principal, Dr. M.H. Mason Jr. Elementary School.

Zorn’s most recent example of bringing resources together to aid students has been the implementation of a mentoring program for some of Mason’s most at-risk students. She has worked with Kid’s Hope USA and facilitated the work between mentors, teachers, students and families. Mentors set goals for students and meet one hour each week to serve as support for

students. This has resulted in increased attendance rates and higher achievement for some of her school's most at-risk students.

Zorn also began a "Girls-Pride" program in which female peer leaders from the feeder middle school come back to the Mason Elementary School to work with fifth-grade girls to address relational aggression issues and assist them with the transition to sixth grade. "It was wonderful to see these young ladies building confidence in preparation for the next step in their education," Jones said.

Zorn's work with peer leaders and mentors extends to her elementary school students as well. A few years ago, she took a group of elementary school students to a peer leadership conference for middle and high school students. Realizing this was an event that would also help elementary school students, she surveyed the elementary schools in Gwinnett County School District to see if they were interested in such a conference and received an overwhelmingly positive response. October 2010 saw the launch of the first Elementary School Peer Leadership Conference in Gwinnett County, with 445 students from 20 schools attending.

"Since Gwinnett County prides itself on envisioning a system of world-class schools through various leadership programs, our goal was to build leadership skills, gain knowledge and expose these students to new experiences," Zorn said. "But it was also about believing they can make a difference in their schools as leaders."

The conference continues to grow each year, with 725 people, representing 36 schools, attending in 2012. "Starting the elementary school peer leadership conference in Gwinnett County has by far been my biggest accomplishment throughout my career as a school counselor," Zorn said. "The smiles on the children's faces, seeing how empowered they feel, is priceless."

The School Counselor of the Year winner and finalists were judged on several

criteria, including: creative school counseling innovations, effective school 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, Ed.D., executive director, American School Counselor Association. “They have unique qualifications and skills that allow them to address students’ academic achievement, career and personal/social development needs.”

Zorn, along with the four School Counselor of the Year finalists, will be flown to Washington, D.C., in late January 2014, for three days of celebratory events. The honorees will have meetings with their members of Congress, attend a congressional briefing and be formally recognized at a black-tie gala.

### **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, career and personal/social development 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 33,000 school counseling professionals. Learn more at [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org).