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**MORENO VALLEY SCHOOL COUNSELOR
NAMED AS FINALIST FOR
SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR**
Vanessa Gomez-Lee from Murrieta, California Among Top Ten

Alexandria, VA, January 22, 2009 — Vanessa Gomez-Lee, a school counselor from Valley View High and Moreno Valley Unified School District, has been named one of the top ten school counselors in America. Gomez-Lee is one of more than 400 elementary, middle, and secondary school counselors nationwide who were nominated for the School Counselor of the Year award. The program, which is presented by Naviance and 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 for thirteen years, Gomez-Lee is an advocate for both her students and her profession. She is widely esteemed for the development of several programs including the Comprehensive Student Assistance Program (CSAP), which provides interventions for struggling students to improve attendance, behavior, and academics, and the Insight Curriculum, which is used to educate at-risk students. Gomez-Lee also passionately spearheaded the creation of the Moreno Valley Unified School District's Suicide Protocol for use with more than 36,000 students. She currently serves as Vice President of the board for Suicide Awareness Requires Action (S.A.R.A.), a non-profit organization founded in memory of a former student by her mother.

Gomez-Lee is a strong leader in her profession and serves as the High School Vice President Representative on the California Association of School Counselors (CASC) Board. A lifelong learner, she shares her knowledge and experience with others as an Adjunct Professor at San Diego State University in the Graduate School of Counseling and Psychology.

“Vanessa works tireless hours to present and promote counseling and guidance as a profession that can provide positive change in students,” said Patty Rucker, Coordinator Student Services, Moreno Valley Unified School District. “She is enthusiastic and passionate about the success of her students and is a true leader among her peers.”

The School Counselor of the Year awards program was open to all 100,000 members of the school counseling profession. The top ten 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. “They have unique qualifications and skills that allow them to address students' academic achievement, personal/social and career development needs.”

Gomez-Lee, along with the other nine finalists, will be flown to Washington, D.C., on January 28, 2009, 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.

Co-chairs of the 2009 School Counselor of the Year program are Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-Cal.) and Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.). The 2009 program is presented by Naviance, a provider of planning and advising systems for secondary schools, and the American School Counselor Association.

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 more than 25,000 school counseling professionals.

About Naviance

Naviance is the leading provider of planning and advising systems for secondary schools. Nearly 40,000 educators and counselors serving more than 3.5 million students in schools across the U.S. and in 60 other countries use Naviance products to manage academic and post-secondary advising, communicate with students and families, and analyze data. For more information about Naviance, visit www.naviance.com.

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