



## **Roberto Aguilar Named 2019 School Counselor of the Year Finalist by the American School Counselor Association**



**ALEXANDRIA, VA** – Roberto Aguilar, a school counselor at Milwaukie High School in Milwaukie, Ore., has been named a 2019 School Counselor of the Year finalist by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Aguilar is a graduate of the University of Oregon and Lewis & Clark College. He has been at Milwaukie High School since 2000.

The School Counselor of the Year award honors professionals who devote their careers to advocating for the nation’s students and addressing their academic and social/emotional development and college and career readiness needs.

Humble, dedicated and selfless are words colleagues use to describe Aguilar’s work ethic and character. Throughout the 16 years he’s served as a school counselor at Milwaukie High School, Aguilar has developed several initiatives to support the unique student population. His commitment to developing programming for the Latino student population led him to create a student affinity group for Latino students. The group, Ascensión, was created to celebrate and develop healthy Chicano/Latino academia, culture and lifestyle. Ascensión meets weekly, is open to all students and staff members and includes social/emotional support, a book club and fitness activities. Mark Pinder, Milwaukie High School principal, credits Aguilar with helping to eliminate Milwaukie High School’s achievement gap between Latino and white students. “Roberto has been a key contributor to this success by his constant and unwavering support of all of our students, but especially our Latino students whom can identify with a strong role model,” Pinder said.

Aguilar's focus on creating a college-going culture at Milwaukie High School led him to launch the Milwaukie Tour of Graduates in 2016. "He recruited graduating seniors to take their free afternoon [on the last day of school], dressed in their caps and gowns, to walk the halls of the elementary schools with the younger students looking on," explained fellow Milwaukie High School counselors Jennifer Krumm and Theresa Halter. The event was intended to honor all students for 12 years of hard work in school but its impact was far bigger than Aguilar imagined. The Tour of Graduates has been a useful tool in improving the school's graduation rate in recent years.

Rolando Cruz, a former student at Milwaukie High School and current Nike corporate employee, recalls Aguilar's support for him and his family as he navigated high school. "My mother and I were overwhelmed with the registration process and changes that high school created. However, having someone like Roberto who understood what we needed and explained things in our native language made everything easier."

Aguilar provided support to Cruz as he considered college options and helped the first-generation student have a sense of belonging. Cruz praises Aguilar for encouraging him to pursue his postsecondary education and graduate studies. "His hard work helped me break the cycle of poverty and has allowed me to be an example for others. I can think of many others Roberto has influenced, and we are all lucky to have him on our team."

The School Counselor of the Year finalists were evaluated based on their ability to create systemic change within the school counseling profession. Through their significant leadership, collaboration and advocacy skills, the School Counselor of the Year finalists achieved increased student success through their comprehensive school counseling programs. Aguilar, along with the additional five School Counselor of the Year finalists, will be in Washington, D.C., Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2019, where they will be honored and formally recognized at a black-tie gala.

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### **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 school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, career planning and social/emotional development to help today's students become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA has a network of 52 state and territory associations and a membership of more than 36,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org).