



Cassie Poncelow Named 2018 School Counselor of the Year Finalist by the American School Counselor Association



ALEXANDRIA, VA – Cassie Poncelow, a school counselor at Poudre High School in Fort Collins, Colo., has been named a 2018 School Counselor of the Year finalist by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Poncelow, a graduate of Colorado State University, has been a school counselor for seven years and has been at Poudre High School since 2013.

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.

Assistant Principal Kelby Benedict says Poncelow went above and beyond when she helped spearhead Poudre High School’s Opportunities Unlimited, a dropout recovery program developed to attract students back to public education so they can complete their high school diploma or GED exam. Poncelow’s frustration with the lack of alternative high school options available in Fort Collins led her to work with Poudre administrators to create the program.

“Students were given a second chance at a high school diploma while taking college courses because of the vision and innovation that Cassie had,” Benedict said. “These students found a home in an educational community, something they had not been able to find previously.”

Poncelow understands different people need to be reached out to in different ways, says Poudre High senior Grace Litts. After a series of tragedies affected schools in the Fort Collins area, Poncelow and Poudre’s counseling team organized events to help students and staff manage their emotions.

Mental Health Matters, an evening event featuring 30 sessions led by community mental health professionals, focused on topics such as stress management, LGBTQ support, depression and anxiety, social media, self-harm and eating disorders. The event attracted more than 400 attendees from Fort Collins, Denver, Greeley and Boulder as well as several state legislators who support mental health funding.

"It was amazing. We were drowning in reviews and a pleased community because of Ms. Poncelow's dedication to Mental Health Matters," Litts says. "She put in so much hard work into creating this event."

Six finalists were selected for School Counselor of the Year based on their ability to create systemic change within the profession through leadership, collaboration and advocacy. All six finalists achieved increased student success through their comprehensive school counseling programs.

Poncelow and the other finalists will be in Washington, D.C., Jan. 31–Feb. 2, 2018, where they will be honored at a special ceremony 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 50 state associations and a membership of more than 34,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.