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For immediate release – Dec. 4, 2020

Barbara Truluck Selected as 2021 School Counselor of the Year Finalist



ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is pleased to announce Barbara Truluck as a finalist for the 2021 School Counselor of the Year awards program (#SCOY21). Truluck is a school counselor, Palmer Middle School, Kennesaw, Ga., where she and another school counselor provide school counseling services to the suburban school’s 905 students, grades 6–8.

“Barbara Truluck embraces all that it means and encompasses to be a school counselor,” said Melissa Marsh, school counseling supervisor, Cobb County School District. “Her quick wit and calming presence help to reassure those facing difficult situations when they cannot see beyond the negative.”

When students were reporting at an alarming rate that they were “just so stressed,” Truluck dug into her school’s attendance data, which indicated a rise in school avoidance. To combat this issue, she created Stress Busters, a small-group intervention focused on managing stress and anxiety. Grounded in the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors’ for Student Success, the group sessions incorporate stretching, visualization, art activities, journaling and deep breathing. As a result, 90% of students reported decreased stress levels, and attendance improved by 82%.

After Truluck observed a correlation between increased discipline referrals for seventh- and eighth-grade male students and a corresponding plummet in student engagement, she launched an intensive intervention aimed at encouraging authentic student engagement, empowering students to find their voice and increasing students' confidence. Inspired by the concept, "It takes a village," Truluck partnered with community leaders and school faculty to create the Champion Mentor Group, a multitiered intervention to foster positive relationships between students and adult mentors. Not only did the collaboration reduce discipline referrals by 47%, but 100% of student participants passed their classes and earned promotion.

"Each year, this School Counselor of the Year program shows us what the research tells us – that school counselors have a significant impact on students' academic achievement, social/emotional development and plans for life after graduation," said Jill Cook, ASCA executive director. "Through their dedication, contributions and excellence, these finalists have demonstrated their commitment to the values and mission of the school counseling profession."

The School Counselor of the Year and finalists will be celebrated in a series of virtual events and will participate in briefings and webinars during National School Counseling Week, Feb. 1–5, 2021.

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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 and territory associations and a membership of nearly 40,000 school counseling professionals. For additional information on the American School Counselor Association, visit www.schoolcounselor.org.