



Sarah Kirk Named 2019 School Counselor of the Year Finalist by the American School Counselor Association



ALEXANDRIA, VA – Sarah Kirk, a school counselor at Monroe Elementary School in Norman, Okla., has been named a 2019 School Counselor of the Year finalist by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Kirk is a graduate of Oklahoma State University. She has been at Monroe Elementary School since 2012.

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.

Kirk is a dedicated advocate for the school counseling profession, students and the education field. Throughout her school counseling career she has served on the board of the Oklahoma School Counselor Association, acted as a mentor to new school counselors in the Norman Public School district and delivered informative presentations highlighting the role of school counselors to stakeholders at Norman Public School’s conference. During the 2018 Oklahoma teacher protests and walk-outs, Kirk rallied alongside her education colleagues to fight for increased education funding. A school counselor who believes in her profession, “Sarah utilized that time to positively advocate with Oklahoma legislators on the students’ needs and the value of a comprehensive school counseling program,” said Sharon Heatly, director of guidance and counseling for Norman Public schools.

Over the past six years, Kirk has taken the initiative to spearhead several innovative programs to support and engage the Monroe Elementary School community. One of her signature initiatives, Monroe’s Mentors, pairs more than

20 students with carefully selected community members/mentors. Many of the selected students/mentees faced unique needs due to a parent's death, incarceration or divorce. The data-driven program is curriculum-based and includes lessons on goal-setting and self-esteem and fosters valuable relationships between the mentors and mentees. The success of the Monroe's Mentors program inspired Kirk to lead the charge to develop additional programs including the peer mentor program, food and resource drives for families in need and a summer camp opportunity. Lori Connery, former principal of Monroe Elementary School, admires Kirk's commitment to the Monroe Elementary School community. "Sarah cares deeply for all students and works diligently to connect Monroe families with community resources that provide food, clothing, shelter, medical, dental and vision services as well as community counseling resources," Connery said.

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. Kirk, 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.