



MONTANA
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

Making a Difference

September 2008

www.mtschoolcounselor.org

Friends of the Family—Summer 2008

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Dear Montana School Counselors:

I hope you are all getting excited about returning to your positions or starting a new one in this same field. I know I am, even with this short season of time off! MSCA is gearing up for this next year with our eyes wide open and looking forward to working for you in the 2008-2009 school year. Regardless of your personal Montana school setting, we are all friends of the family and encourage you to contact any one of us on the board should you need help with anything in your current

assignment. Having said that, a friendly reminder that we will have positions opening up next fall, 2009. We will be staying with our application process and nominations in the late winter or early spring. At this time we encourage you to search within yourself and to consider the possibility of stepping up, into something new, accepting a bit more responsibility and being offered some opportunities as well; to network with other leaders in collaborative efforts and to be a voice for Montana School Counselors. There are always opportunities to serve. We are

looking for nominations for our April ballot now. Please take a few minutes to reflect whether this might be a good time for you! Submit your letter of interest to me at: Kristy_savaria@laurel.k12.mt.us.

Recently I have had the privilege of attending the National Delegate Assembly and various sectionals at ASCA's National School Counselor Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. I tell you this not to brag or make myself seem larger than life, but because this is a position any one of you could

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Peace for the Peacemakers

"For we must come to see that peace is not merely the absence of some negative force; it is the presence of a positive force. True peace is not merely the absence of tension, but it is the presence of justice and brotherhood." (Martin Luther King, 1961)

Greetings Montana School Counselors! I hope that you had a restful and rejuvenating summer spent with friends and family. This summer I had the pleasure of representing MSCA at the national ASCA conference in Atlanta, Georgia, the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King. I received great

inspiration from visiting the birthplace and memorial of Dr. King and reflecting on his teachings. My favorite keynote of the conference focused on Dr. King and other great peacemakers, and related the role of the professional school counselor as a peacemaker in the schools and communities that we serve. I wanted to share a few thoughts about this message of peace as we prepare to face the challenges of our roles as professional school counselors for the 2008-2009 school year.

Adequate Yearly Progress – or not? Budget cuts,

personnel cuts, reassignment of additional duties, class size, scheduling new students, dealing with unsupportive staff, all while we are helping our students in the areas of academic, personal/social, and career development and success, and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes and enhances student achievement and holistic functionality. Phew, for me that makes for a full day of challenges, problem solving, demands, and responsibility.

The vision that I would share with you is the power that we have in our role as a profes-

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Important Dates

- Native American Day—September 26, 2008
- MEA/MFT Conference—October 16-17, 2008 Missoula, MT
- MSCA Conference—April 16-17, 2009 Bozeman, MT
- ASCA National Conference June 28-July 1, 2009 Dallas, TX

Friends of the Family—Summer 2008 Contd. from P. 1

have at any given time, a position in this growing MSCA family where you would have the capability to support all of us in Montana with effective strategies supporting positive climate and student growth and change in our industry... of growing people towards future productive growth. I am coming up on my first year anniversary of leading as your Montana State President. Our board has been working on positive growth and change patterns that will really help you to feel successful and good about what you do and to fulfill your requests for professional development in this field in a continuous way throughout this summer as well as the regular school year.

When you become involved as a state leader in the position of President or President Elect attending these delegate assemblies and conferences, it is to not only to imagine, but actually define what this body of people has the ability to do nationwide. It is an evolving process where change is constant and there is a definite structure which is able to truly support us if we use those resources in our everyday jobs and life. I know we have talked about policy governance a lot at our state level during the last two or three years and what it can do for our state organization and members. This isn't a new concept, however it is relatively new to us as we are becoming more involved in the process of what a difference we

make in the lives of our students. We direct you to our website to review the Montana School Counselor Program Model, we ask you to refer to the national model on ASCA's website. We want you to use these resources and to ask if you need help. We hope to see you at the MEA-MFT fall conference in Missoula, Montana where Trauma and Crisis Intervention will be the primary focus. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please cut out and use the book marker next to my article as a reminder of my commitment to excellence serving all of you this next year.

Your Friend,

Kristy Savaria
MSCA President

Peace for the Peacemakers Contd. from P. 1

sional school counselors. We are the change agents in our school. We solve the difficult problems to the best of our ability with the resources we have. We connect with the challenging student or staff member. We create opportunities for students to explore and discover their passions, as well as their

shared humanity. We listen to the challenges and stories that come to our doors; we help, and we care. We build relationships with students, parents, staff, and community members. We are a positive force in the lives of our students. We are instruments of peace and hope, every day with each interac-

tion.

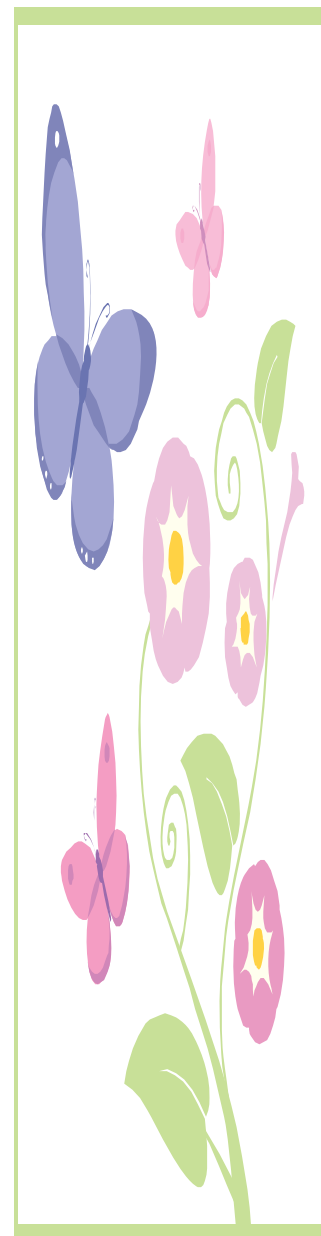
I share peace with you as you bring the message of peace to your students, schools and communities across Montana.

Carrie Stefanatz
President-Elect

**Kay
Hiner**

*Featured Montana School Counselor
from Harlowton*

On my way to a recent Board meeting I traveled through several small towns in our beautiful state and had the privilege of stopping into Harlowton and meeting Kay Hiner. Kay is a K-12 School Counselor and serves students in the combined middle/high school all day Monday and mornings on the other days. She is in the elementary schools Tuesday through Friday in the afternoons. Kay teaches Life Skills classes for ½ hour a week in the kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms. One of the things that impressed me most about Kay is that, although I never met her before, she knew I was the President of our MSCA website, www.mtschoolcounselor.org, and said she has used the links to connect students to recessious professional which was obvious to me by the having things in order keeps her on target when stumagine that! She took pride in introducing me to her adjust their schedules and just say "hi". She is excited April, 2009. She already had it sketched in and we development is in keeping ahead of the game in this where she has family. In her spare time she loves her family and friends. Kay and her husband Todd are both from the Harlowton area; they have two children: Alia and Romulus. A great idea for us to remember is our passion during the busiest time of the year and to take time to "smell the roses". Thank you Kay for letting us see a small piece of who you are and what you are all about. We look forward to seeing you as an emerging leader in this profession in the future. Submitted by: *Kristy Savaria, MSCA President*



Compassion.....Can You Meet the Challenge?

Welcome back to another year! I'm sure you, like me, are wondering where summer went. Those rainy days when I was going to come in and straighten out my office never did seem to materialize!

Part of my summer was spent in the hospital and rehabilitation wing of the nursing home with my elderly mother who fell and injured her pelvis in June. Throughout her long, complicated ordeal, we met many wonderful caregivers. As I was deliberating what to write about for this newsletter, the term compassion kept coming to mind. Webster's defines compassion as "a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress, together with a desire to alleviate it." Obviously, those folks employed in health care need to show compassion, but, being on the receiving end made me realize how important it really is.

I was reminded that we, as counselors, have the same responsibility as healthcare workers to show compassion to our "patients". Even little things showing concern make a big difference to those of us "in distress." As we start out another year, I challenge you all to take that extra minute to show compassion to those students, faculty or parents who may be in need of a caring, kind word or action.

Sometimes it doesn't take much to make someone's day a whole lot better.

Recently, a fellow counselor shared an article that appeared online at [InDepth Press](#) listing ten tips for creating a compassionate classroom. I would like to share them with you.

* Ten Tips for Creating a Compassionate Classroom:

- 1) Have visible quotes on the class walls or whiteboard about the necessity of taking risks (asking questions and risking mistakes) in order to learn. Prize your students' efforts *more* than results!
- 2) Admit to your own mistakes and proudly correct them. Show students how important fallibility is in the process of adulthood...that our shared humanness means there is *no shame* in vulnerability.
- 3) Reward students *in visible ways* for reaching out and helping other students with projects, lessons or homework.
- 4) Create diverse learning pods where students from different backgrounds must work together to accomplish a goal.
- 5) Read current events where people facing cross cultural divides come to an agreement or shared outcome.

6) Have a "heritage learning module" where each student brings in objects or stories from their heritage... that apply to the thematic focus of the class or lesson.

7) Brainstorm in class about which countries are represented by the ancestors of your students. What are the strengths of those countries in terms of educational contributions to the subject you are studying?

8) Design a policy with your students about the use of slang or derogatory language. Have them determine why such language can inhibit learning.

9) Intervene openly and adamantly when any stereotyping or labeling goes on, and take a moment to discuss why this hurts the learning process and maintains narrow thinking.

10) Have pictures and quotes decorating your classroom that show diverse voices which celebrate the right of *all* people to learn.

Have a great year, and remember your executive board is here to help with questions you may have along the way. In closing, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." ~Dalai Lama

Linda Konesky
K-12 Vice-President

**"...we, as
counselors,
have the same
responsibility
to show
compassion..."**

Consider running for a position on the [MSCA Board](#) in April, 2009—Serves Oct. 2009-2011.

Open positions are : President-Elect, Middle School Vice President, K-12 Vice President

Treasurer & Secretary will be open by appointment by President. **Contact, Kristy Savaria now!**

Counselors—Start Your Engines!

I hope you all had a wonderful summer! It sounds like we all kept fairly busy – definitely too fast for me. I was feeling a little overwhelmed thinking about all the things I want to do and trying to get ready for the students. I had to stop and take a deep breath and decided I wanted this to be the best year yet...I want to be “revved”. So let me share some thoughts about getting your 08-09 school year off to a powerful start. Although each of us drive different cars” (responsibilities and personalities), I think there are some things we can do to really “shift” our school year into high gear!

1. Know the road. It’s important to know what the road is going to look like, so I get my planner in order. I start with the Activities Director’s calendar and copy all of the activities into my planner. I use a lot of abbreviations (XC, FB, BBB, GBB, VB, etc) and colored highlighters (lunch duty, etc). I make sure I add my test dates (ACT, AS-VAB, etc.) to the AD’s calendar as well. I schedule in parent nights, financial aid workshops, college tours, (MSCA 4/16-17), etc. Make a “pit stop” with teachers to find out about

any special events they have planned. (Or ask them as a group in your staff meeting.) I also touch base with teachers I do presentations for and try to get those scheduled. In addition, if you teach a class, you can schedule that in and identify any conflicts. At our school we are assigned to mentor a few students so I put their birthdays in my planner and print their schedules. This can work great for any students you have that need a little special attention. Lastly, I write in any standing meetings, conferences, etc. Maybe this year consider “fueling up” with a monthly “coffee hour with the counselor” for the parents and get it on your calendar!

2. Get your pistons in sync (files). I collect a lot of mail and materials over the summer (and I hang on to all of it). I sort through these then review existing files to see what I still need, what I can toss, or what I can move. I purchased 3” 3-ring binders to get special activities organized (i.e. one of my large tasks is our career fair and I like to make sure I maintain copies of all the documents and correspondence).

3. Get your passengers buckled up. It helps to

make notes next to student names such as “played softball”, “attended a Gear Up Camp”, “sister graduated”, or “worked at...”, which helps me to remember to visit with them about these things when I see them. If you’re unfamiliar with some students consider taking out the year book to get more familiar. Once students are at school I want my priority to be visible and available. I make time early to visit with all seniors individually to start discussing credits for graduation, GPA’s, their future plans and test dates. If any of you have procedures that work for you to make sure you see all your students, please let us know!

Some of you may schedule pit stops in the classrooms to introduce yourself. I like to take a treat, or pens or pencils, – students love free stuff! Do you have an attention-getting activity you want to share? Then there’s planning for bulletin boards, handouts, etc. So much to do! Well, I hope you all had your engines tuned this summer and keep it revved until May! Good luck and very best wishes for a successful year!

Vicki Smith
High School Vice-President

**...there are
some things we
can do to really
“shift” our
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high gear!”**

New Student Groups— A Strategy that Works!

In the spring issue, Amy Griffin wrote an article entitled, “Providing Groups for Students.” Tailgating on that, I would like to focus this article on the helpfulness of providing groups for new students in your school. First, let me say that I am honored to be filling Amy’s shoes as she leaves the Board. For those of you who may not have heard, Amy has moved to Twin Bridges where her husband is the new Principal. Amy will work as a therapist in the Alta Care program there. She was a valuable member of the Board and will be missed but we all wish her well and plan to stay connected with Amy in her new role.

Like many of you, I have tried many different strategies in my job as school counselor. Some have worked, some haven’t. As you well know, we need to make every minute count. I’d like to share with you one of the most effective strategies I’ve found in my work here at Deer Lodge Elementary School, worth every bit of energy and maximizing my time.

This strategy was born out of an *identified need*, which is critical to the success of any program. Ironically, this need began as early as my own 4th grade experience. My family moved and I began in a new school that fall. I was scared to death. I had always loved school and enjoyed my familiar surroundings and friends and did not want to

change schools. After the first day, I was so miserable I pretended I was sick and stayed at home the next two days. For weeks I would not leave a single book, pencil, or piece of paper in my desk but hauled everything home with me each night in a brown paper grocery bag. Looking back, it is obvious that I could have used some help in making the adjustment to my new school.

I offer weekly lunch groups, by grade level, to our new students. The groups are weekly for the first 6-8 weeks of school, and after that we meet monthly. Any student new to our district is invited to participate. Included in our enrollment packets is a letter from me to the parents, welcoming them and letting them know about the new student groups, with a consent form on the bottom of the letter.

The benefits to the students include: 1) Meeting the other new students! When you are new, you don’t know who else is new. It gives them the chance to meet the other new students in their grade. Often they don’t meet students who are outside their own classroom without a unique opportunity. 2) Facilitates a sense of belonging. I have seen over and over how students who participate in the group

develop a sense of “oneness” in their lunch group. They make connections that carry over to the playground and even after school playmates. They identify with each other and find common ground. 3) Develops social skills. Small groups in grade schools are wonderful opportunities to help coach some of the behaviors that are more difficult for a teacher to address in the larger classroom setting. 4) Increases social “currency.” Because lunches with the counselor are also offered for good behavior at our school, the students here see it as a privilege to have lunch in my room and work toward that end. Included in the new student group program is “bring a friend day.” New students love the chance to choose a friend to bring to group and they have a lot of friends wanting to come. This is always a very fun time and an opportunity to affirm kindness the continuing students offer to new students.

Benefits to the district are: 1) Creates good public relations. When we can show parents that we have a genuine care and concern for the well-being of their child in a concrete way, it goes a long way toward developing trust and positive working relationships. 2) Serves as a screening tool. Many times we have had students move to our district without any documentation or identification of special needs. We, as counselors, are trained in how to

“New student groups are one of the best things I do with my time.”

identify these and small group lunches have been a good tool for me to help identify the need for a variety of special services.

New student groups are one of the best things I do with my time. I have seen terrific benefits over the years and have had feedback from parents, teachers, and administration that it is helpful. It is proactive, preventive, and helps the entire system, in keeping with the ASCA National Model goals and objectives.

*Renee Schoening
Elementary School
Vice-President*

Back to School....

the New Three R's...and Responsibility

I realize that when educators and parents think about the “Three R’s” they usually think of “reading, writing, and arithmetic”. Many have written or read about replacing those old standby Three R’s” with “rigor, relevancy, and relationships”. As school counselors, we certainly realize how important it is for school assignments to be: an appropriate challenge (rigor); for academic activities and assignments to be congruent to the objective

(relevancy); and the importance of one’s socialization (relationships). In order for students and/or our children to be even more successful in their academic and personal development, I would like to add yet one more “R” to this alliteration...responsibility. Responsibility, simply stated, will be that beautiful red cherry added to the top of our pedantic hot fudge sundae.

In order for a student to demonstrate true responsibility, they must be able to take responsibility for their own learning. Since I believe that being responsible just might be synonymous with being organized, I would like you to consider that there are many seeds to be planted, nurtured, and cultivated in order to produce an organized student. It is likely that organization provides a more direct path for one to be successful at demonstrating responsibility. This is not a behavior trait that is inherited, as it is first modeled by their first and most important teachers...their parents. Students that are the most organized usually have parents that model expectations regarding the importance of attendance, grades, chores, and personal honesty (“*Do as I say and do as I do*”). A couple of years ago, I remember listening to NPR about a study concerning adults that were the “happiest and most fulfilled”. After the study surveyed Harvard graduates that were in their mid-forties and identified those that reported to be “the happiest and most fulfilled”, they then re-surveyed this smaller group to find the

most common variables. Interestingly, the most common variable was that as children, they had family chores. When you stop and think about all of the implications and some of the small approximations to influencing personal development, it makes total sense. Being able to know and meet their parent’s expectations, knowing that they are contributing to their family unit, knowing that they had a responsibility for specific tasks, and of course this list could just go on and on (Hmm...*The 40 Traits of Assets Building*...possibly a future newsletter?).

In the list below, I would like to share just a few reminders from *The Parent Institute* for students, parents, and staff to assist our students to become more organized as they master responsible behavior:

Goals – regularly set goals for what needs to be accomplished.

Planning – day-by-day and week-by-week.

Assignment Sheets – daily keeping track of all assignments.

Prep the night before – lay out clothes, backpack ready to go.

Transportation – be sure they know how they will get to school.

Get enough sleep – at least 9 hours each night.

Attendance – they must be there to learn.

Study Skills – learning how to

study for tests, take notes, main ideas, etc.

Paying Attention – listen and follow directions carefully.

Location to study at home – a quiet area to promote fewer distractions.

Lockers – put morning books and afternoon books in separate area.

Daily Schedule – an established routine encourages organization.

Binder – 2 inch ring, zippered, pencil pouch, dividers, and needed materials.

I encourage you to look at the brief list above and add your own suggestions. Yes, I realize that we don’t always have parents with the skills to be the ideal model and we have to provide repeated teachable moments. Perhaps you would kindly bring your suggestions, success stories, or frustrations to our spring conference for Middle School Sharing. In the meantime, keep doing what you do best in order to encourage responsible behavior for your students, as you strive to increase their organization skills. Once again, think about how **rigor**, relevancy, relationships...and responsibility pertains to your student’s academic, social, and emotional development. Have a great year.

Elaine Schoyen
Middle School
Vice-President

“Responsibility, simply stated, will be that beautiful red cherry added to the top of our pedantic hot fudge sundae.”

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Do you know any members who relocated? Please
take a moment to let us know their new address:
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The MSCA Newsletter, "Making a Difference" is published three times annually as a service to our members. Two issues are sent to members electronically and one issue is mailed. Board members, except for Treasurer and Secretary, submit articles of interest related to their level of representation. We welcome articles of interest from members or other educational professionals who would like to share information. We encourage submissions be written in a friendly, informative, and practical style rather than technical or academic. Articles must be original and references are to be used when appropriate rather than footnotes. Articles must meet the mission of MSCA. No compensation is given for submitted articles. All articles are available on the MSCA website: www.mtschoolcounselor.org.

Advertisements may be submitted according to guidelines found on the website. (Full P. 1X=\$150, 1/2 P. 1X=\$125, 1/4 P. 1X=\$75, 1/2 Column 1X=\$50; see additional options). We reserve the right to edit copy or reject advertisements that do not meet the mission of MSCA. If you have questions please contact the Editor, Vicki Smith.

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