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Seasons Greetings Montana School Counselors

By Carrie Stefanatz, MSCA President

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I hope that this newsletter brings you Christmas cheer and strength as we serve our students and families at this very needy time. I hope that you are finding time for self-care as you extend love and care for those around you.

I am excited to share with you about the School Counselor Leadership Initiative and its recent developments. The School Counseling Leadership Initiative is a coordinated effort of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commissioner

of Higher Education, and the Board of Public Education. SCLI brings together key organizations, agencies and other stakeholders with an interest in school counselors and school counseling programs. Its goal is to help enhance student success and promote lifelong educational opportunities through collaborative leadership and advocacy to support implementation of a comprehensive counseling program in every K-12 school in Montana. Barb Holden and

I represent MSCA on this initiative.

As you remember from the last newsletter, as a part of the SCLI, Barb Holden, Matthew Johnson and myself worked with OPI over the summer to develop a Regional Training model, which aims toward implementation of a comprehensive counseling program for Montana school districts. You will be receiving a beautiful brochure at your school district in the next weeks called "Transforming School

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Professional Development

By Dr. Marolane Stevenson, President-Elect

This is my first article written for the newsletter as your president-elect. I have always loved my profession – my students and my colleagues. What a treat it is to go to school every day. Think about it. There is never a boring day because no day is alike. We meet very interesting people.

I do believe, however, that we need to get outside our schools and districts to talk with people who do the same thing we do, but perhaps, in different ways. We can learn from them. Others are very willing to share

information about some fantastic programs in their schools to help students, whether it be to help high risk, gifted, bi-polar, depressed, or under-achieving students. Counselors can tell us about programs they have implemented in their schools regarding bullying, texting, and increasing student achievement. There is no point in trying to reinvent the wheel when we can share.

If you become involved in your professional organization by becoming an officer or helping in some

capacity, you get to know people better and do expand your horizon. Keep coming to conferences, offer to help, and be sure to talk with your officers. They are a great group: energetic, positive, and aware beyond the state of Montana.

As an organization we are promoting the establishment of comprehensive and developmental guidance and counseling programs. There are things that all of us do and should include in a program but have the flexibility to design programs that specifi-

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Important Dates

- MIEA Conference
Billings, Apr. 8-11, 2010
- MSCA Spring Institute
Bozeman, Apr. 22-23,
2010
- ASCA National Conference
Boston, MA, July 3-6, 2010

Greetings From Your Past-President

By Kristy Savaria, Past-President

“As Past-President, my goal is to continue with smooth transition into this new area as well.”

What a glorious position to be in; one of experience and reflection, bittersweet, like a brick of divine, raw, dark chocolate, yet, mixed with a little milk and sugar makes fantastic hot chocolate to be slowly sipped and cradled. It is a time to savor all that I have been taught, to use that knowledge in as many ways as possible, knowing that it is time for me to focus on other functions on our board. I also plan on spending more time with my family. Each President moves forward utilizing policy governance to protect not only our members, but the association itself, so it will remain a viable entity and be sustainable. As Past-President, my goal is to continue with smooth transition into this new area as well.



It occurred to me that for the regular member and/or even newer board members or members who have not been in the Pres. Elect or Pres. Position, it may not be clear as to what the function of this office really is. So, I start out my new position with the actual job description for your review.

The Past-President shall:

1. attend all meetings of the Executive Board,
2. provide support as necessary to the President and the Executive Board,
3. perform such duties as maybe requested by the President or the Executive Board,
4. serve as chair of the Bylaws and Policies Committee ,
5. serve as a member of the Finance Committee,
6. in a capacity to be agreed upon by the MSCA Board, help with facilitation of the annual MSCA Spring Institute and attend the fall conference as appropriate,
7. submit articles/information to each newsletter relevant to school counselors,
8. maintain the Past-President’s binder, including Bylaws, Policies and Procedures, Strategic Plan, Minutes, Financial Reports and other information pertinent to this position.

Each year Bylaws and Policies are reviewed and sometimes changes are made. Bylaws must have a majority vote from the membership for changes to occur. Policies are board driven and decided upon with a majority vote of the board as well. This is probably the most important area the Past-President supports and has input into as a facilitator. Any member may offer input into

these areas. Beginning in about 2006, our board saw a need to develop a best practice or operating procedure area which is now titled, “Board Policies and Procedures.” We actively work on this area so that our members will know that we are accountable for all of our actions with association business. Another reason was to have clarity of expectations and to make things accessible for new board members so that all of our best past practices were written down and easy to review. We decided to publish those last year for all of you to see. You are more than welcome to voice your thoughts on either of these areas by emailing me and I will bring your ideas to the board. This is a great place for the Past-President to work as they have been on the board for at least four years when they reach this place. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have ideas or further questions: kristy_savaria@laurel.k12.mt.us.



How Do We Face This: Facebook as a Professional Tool

By Vicki Smith, High School V. P.

Many of us have bought into the hype of Facebook; sharing messages, photos and videos, and chatting with friends and family. I've connected with old friends and classmates I haven't heard from in years! You can poke people, tag people, send a heart, take a quiz or join a "cause". There's so much going on it's mind boggling!

In addition to family, coworkers and classmates, I've had several requests from current and past students who've sent me a "friend" request. As a professional school counselor, how do I face this?

When I recently entered ASCA Scene, a great dialogue site for members, I was thrilled to see another member counselor ask if any of us use Facebook. It was a very general question and didn't actually imply "for counseling". But there were 953 views of the question—and 20 members took the time to share their thoughts from a school counselor perspective.

The responses were fairly split as to whether or not school counselors should have Facebook accounts accessible to students. Seven responses approved of the use of Facebook; however, most suggested creating a separate account for our "professional" interactions

while some went further and suggested a separate account for current students and a separate account for past students. There were comments suggesting having contact with just current students (not past students), while others thought it was okay but we should not "friend" any students or parents. (I'm not sure how that works.) And counselors are concerned about seeing or reading something that places the counselor in a position to have to report or address other issues of concern (cyberbullying). In addition to the possibility of becoming cyber-cops the other main concern is the issue of maintaining appropriate boundaries as a professional school counselor. If we accept students as a "friend" on Facebook, are we muddling the student and school counselor relationship? ASCA Scene referenced an article on KPTV.com about a school in Oregon considering a complete teacher-student Facebook ban to eliminate potential cyber problems!

What a great debate! We are living in the age of technology and I truly respect each person's view point. In this high tech world that we live in, do

we make ourselves accessible to our students in the way they are most comfortable? Do we maintain a separate "professional" page to maintain appropriate boundaries? Are other venues more appropriate for technological communication? (Tweeter, blogs, etc.) There are endless questions when we ask ourselves how we face this!

The timeliness of this debate has been further brought out in the most recent issue of *ASCA Schoolcounselor* (Nov/Dec, 2009). Several authors addressed high tech issues brought out by the use of Facebook as well as cell phones, tweeter, blog, etc. Some schools actually have a Facebook site. Rhonda Williams, EdD, LPC, NCC, stressed the need for caution as social networking sites can easily create a dual relationship. She referred to the ASCA Ethical Standards and the need to include information about informed consent as well as school policies that will protect the student as well as the in-

tegrity and intent of the school's Facebook page. Trae Turner referenced a school counseling department that set up and merged all the latest social networking capabilities to deliver messages to students in a streamlined manner. Parents and students can become "fans" and receive posts on Facebook but they used the settings to disable comments on the posted messages. When they do want feedback on guidance topics they use their blog's settings to open up comments. Another school in Iowa, whose goal is to get the word out, set up a Twitter account to send messages to students. I'm impressed with how some counselors/schools are embracing the capabilities of technology.

Dr. Carolyn Stone wrote on legal and ethical issues of technology. You may have already heard this but it's always a great reminder: never post anything on Facebook that you wouldn't

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Girls: Friendship, Jealousy and Rational Aggression

A Continuous Challenge

By Renee' Schoening, Elementary School V.P.

“.....we all want the same things—to be liked, accepted, and to feel like we have loyal friends.”



This past week a large portion of my time has been taken up by girls and their conflicts. This certainly isn't new, but some new challenges had me digging back into my own research from a few years ago. In 2005, I finished my dissertation entitled, "An Exploration of Friendship, Jealousy, and Relational Aggression in Pre-adolescent Girls." The findings of my research were complex and quite surprising. Space doesn't allow for a complete discussion of a dissertation; however I thought I'd share a few of the more pertinent findings with you in hopes that you will find them helpful in your work at school.

First, I want to say that while the research I did focused on pre-adolescent girls, the literature clearly says that the phenomenon of relational aggression is pervasive and can be seen as early as pre-school and is definitely something high school girls engage in. So, if you happen to be a high school or middle school counselor who is taking the time to read the elementary column, you're in luck! Hopefully you will find something here that will be useful to you. I frequently talk to school counselors who deal with girls and their "drama" continuously and many are looking for solutions. I once heard a former school counselor speak at an ASCA national conference and she stated, "I got out of school counseling because of 4th grade girls!" While she may have been kidding a bit, I think we all understand that finding solutions to this pervasive problem is a huge

challenge.

The theory developed in my study was that girls are motivated primarily by a **need for belonging**. This finding was consistent with Adlerian theoretical perspectives in that all behavior is purposive. The data collected suggested that relational aggression is a social strategy that results in peer perceived popularity and power. Girls play different roles within their friendship groups and some relational aggression is intended to maintain those roles or jockey for new ones. This has been helpful for me in my work as a school counselor to understand. When meeting with groups of girls I remind them that we all want the same things – to be liked, accepted, and to feel like we have loyal friends.

A counterpart to this need for belonging is the understanding that the "meanest" thing girls can do to another is to leave another out. Worse is when a **group** of girls excludes one girl from an activity or certain "clique". In my research, girls repeatedly talked about horrible things that girls do to one another from hitting, slamming heads against lockers, saying rude things, three-way calling, etc. Over and over again they would give a litany of awful things and then conclude with "and then. . . she left me out!" The emotion expressed when talking about exclusion was intense.

This is very important for school staff to understand for a

number of reasons. First, girls KNOW they are being mean when they leave another out. It is usually intentional, but they know that it isn't something they can easily be called on. Helping students understand they you know it is intentionally mean is critical. Holding them accountable to not doing it is also important. Another very key thing is for school counselors to do everything they can to avoid perpetuating the problem. For example, if you are having a girls group of some kind (even if it's just eating lunch with you one day), be sure it is inclusive. Ask all the girls in Mrs. Jones' third grade class, or find some other way to group them up other than the girls pre-selecting who is to be included.

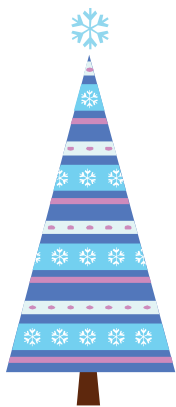
Another finding was that girls really don't have the conflict resolution skills they need to negotiate their friendship problems. They look to each other for reassurance and sometimes this ends up being a session of bashing another girl behind her back. A challenge that I give to the students is to never say an unkind word behind another's back. It can make an amazing difference and some girls have come back to me and asked for help with this because they "didn't know how hard that would be." I also teach conflict resolution to give them options for future ways of relating and solving their disagreements. A policy that I have in my office is to never talk about another student who isn't present. This is a way I model my own

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A Day In the Life



*The alarm rings too early, I'm still running late.
My clothes are so wrinkled, and no leftovers, just great!
I make it to work, but the coffee's all gone.
Now I can't find my keys, what else could go wrong?
The mail's piling up, till I can't find my desk.
I stop and I wonder, now what could be next.
So I walk down the hall, to take a quick break.
Run into the boss, what does he want? Oh great!
I then see some students, out for their recess.
Is that the same shirt, for three days? Yeah I guess.
The new freshman's there crying her family's been split.
A player got mad at the coach, and just quit.
Did you hear the cook's only son might have cancer?
And Mr. Smith's wife lost her job, what's the answer.
I make it to four and I'm on my way home.
On most days, I'm glad to make this trip alone.
This long day's events spin round in my brain.
And then of course I have to wait for a train.
At home, I fix supper and check for clean clothes.
Where the heck are my blue shoes? Nobody knows.
I pay a few bills and then fall into bed.
Prayers for friends and family spin round in my head.
As I drift off to sleep, I think what waits tomorrow.
More heartache, disappointment, conflict and sorrow?
I wake with a start, check the clock. Oh just great!
Two hours till the alarm, but you know what?
I CAN'T WAIT!*



By Lisa Kuehn, K-12 Vice-President

Issues that Cloud the Holiday Season

Sheri Koyama, Middle School Vice-President

“Sometimes it is hard to put the school setting into perspective when the students are dealing with other issues...”

I would like to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season, a very Merry Christmas, and a great and productive New Year. This is the time of year we treasure our families, friends and colleagues.

As counselors we see so much hardship, whether it be poverty, substance, mental or physical abuse in the families of the youth we work with. Sometimes it is hard to put the school setting into perspective when the students are dealing with other issues on a daily basis.

One issue that has arisen lately in our school is that of “Huffing” or “Dusting”. I’m sure it has been going on, but we caught 8 students huffing in a classroom during school

hours. They had a can of “canned air”, used for cleaning the computer keys, and were inhaling it. We do not allow “AIR” in the school, but these girls told their mothers that they needed it for their computer class. It is not sold over the counter, so mom had to buy it for them, not knowing what it was really going to be used for. They were given Out of School Suspension for 2 days and have to attend a “Choices” class. They were not aware that this was a dangerous practice because it is only “Air”. Consequently, we now do not allow sweat-shirts or backpacks in any of the classrooms.

This is an issue that you

might touch on with all of your students, whether it is Middle School, High School or even Elementary students. Huffing has been around forever, but some of the products that we see are the canned air and “Axe” deodorant, felt tip markers and hair spray. There is a huge amount of information on the internet. Please take some time to read up on this and inform your staff and parents. It should not be taken lightly!

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Spring Conference in Bozeman. It seems that the time from Christmas to the conference in the spring is a long haul. We will be ready for a break. See you then.

Addressing Non-Traditional Occupations

Submitted by Madeline Mussman

Non-traditional occupations (NTO's) are those careers whose overall composition is comprised of 25% or less of one gender or another, i.e. women in engineering, men in nursing. Research has shed light on the fact that this trend is less ability-based (girls and boys score identical on math/science tests through the 6th grade) and more related to social pressures. Specifically, there seems to be some inherent social biases leading men and women into different career paths.

As a result, the Office of Rural Health and the Office of Public Instruction have teamed up in an attempt to mediate these discrepancies. We have decided on several projects, one of which is a curriculum/informational outreach directive aimed at High School Counselors and Teachers to help them help their students get into NTO's. For the second project, we are making a short documentary highlighting the paths that current Montana students/professionals took into NTO majors/careers. We will compile the experiences from our student/professional population into a short and sweet movie/multi-media presentation that we will then distribute across this GREAT state.

(Watch for a website to be available in the future!)

Seasons Greetings contd. from P. 1

Counseling in Montana.” The brochure introduces initiative and concept of the regional trainings. I am pleased to announce that these trainings will be organized in five regions in Montana and you will not need to travel a long distance to receive the training. Also, MSCA school counselor leaders will be conducting the local trainings. The goal is for the regional trainings to take place in February of 2010. This is an excellent opportunity for visibility, growth and outreach for MSCA.

The first training will be a Level 1 Training. It is de-

signed for counselor/administrator teams to work together to learn the basic principles of the Montana School Counseling Program Model. The training will include roles and responsibilities of counselors and administrators within the program and steps for implementation of the Model.

Next, I am thrilled to share that the School Counseling Leadership Initiative Committee has been invited to speak to the Montana Interim Legislative Session on December 11th. The leadership group will be advocating for comprehensive school counseling programs

for all Montana students and discussing the regional training process. I am excited and proud to speak on your behalf to tell Montana Legislators about the vital role we play in educating Montana students.

So my friends, it is a very exciting time to be a school counselor in Montana. MSCA is working with key educational players to move our profession forward. We look forward to your ideas, participation and feedback about this exciting initiative. Please contact me with any questions on this project.

Wishing You a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



Professional Development contd. from P. 1

cally meet the needs of the populations we serve in our school and community. Carrie and Barb Holden have worked hard to provide a format using the ASCA model to help us. They will be keep you posted.

As President-Elect, two of my responsibilities are legislation and ethics. At this time our nation is focused on health care, but I will try to keep you abreast of future educational concerns/bills. If you have ideas or comments about anything I have said, please get in touch with me by phone or e-mail. I welcome the communication.

Facebook, contd. from P. 3

want posted on the front halls of the school...or the front page of the local newspaper. She wrote about the trust responsibility we have yet there are teachers who continue to breach this trust and are losing their jobs for posting inappropriate material on social Web sites. Carolyn addressed our responsibility to protect students and promote appropriate use of technology. She insists that we work toward best practices in our online behavior and always keep in mind our professional standard of care

and ethical guidelines.

My overall sense from all this input comes down to our own goals (as a counselor and a school), our comfort level with technology, and our ethical responsibility to foster and maintain a professional relationship with our students. We're going to have different directives based on the community we live in and the perspectives or our administration. Time and experience will guide us as we travel on this high-tech journey.



Montana Virtual Academy Gears Up for Spring Registration

Submitted by Collier Kaler

The new Montana Virtual Academy (MTVA), housed in the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Montana, Missoula, is gearing up for spring registration of high school students. Courses will be developed, and online teachers hired and trained, in order to deliver classes at the start of the 2010-2011 school year.

Montana House Bill 459 of the 61st Legislature established the MTVA for the purpose of making distance-learning opportunities available to all Montana school-age children through their public school districts. High school classes and credit recovery options will be offered the first year, additional online offerings will be available in the future. Coursework will be taught by highly qualified Montana-licensed instructors and, during the 2010-2011 school year, be tuition-free. Interaction will be a major component of MTVA coursework and efforts will be made to use methods where instructors interact with students, parents, and counselors.



MONTANA VIRTUAL ACADEMY

Students must be enrolled in their local school districts in order to participate in the MTVA program and local school district policies and practices govern which students may register for the MTVA coursework. Courses will be delivered asynchronously via the Blackboard Learning Management System. Students are expected to read, listen, view, and interactively participate in learning activities determined by the teacher of each course. For more information on the Montana Virtual Academy, please contact Rayleen Hicks, MTVA Administrative Associate, at rayleen.hicks@mso.umt.edu, phone 406-243-4619, or visit the website at mtva.us.

Experienced educator, Robert Currie, was named the first Director of Montana Virtual Academy on December 7th. Currie has directed the Michigan Virtual School in Lansing for the past six years. He has also worked as an assistant high school principal, high school principal, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, and district superintendent. Currie will assume his duties effective January 4, 2010 out of the University of Montana in the new Phyllis J. Washington Education Center.

New on the ASCA Scene -

If you are not a member of ASCA, consider joining! The benefits far outweigh the membership cost!

New for members is the ASCA Scene, the online professional networking site. Members can participate in elementary, middle school and high school level discussions as well as other topics: general, ethical issues, counselor educator, legislative, RAMP, etc.

For more information go to:

www.schoolcounselor.org

Girls, Contd from P. 4

challenge to them, but I also believe it's just good practice.

These are just a couple of the insights I gained from doing my research. It's become a passion of mine to continue to find ways to help girls be better at encouraging each other and building one another up whenever they can. I would love to hear about your strategies or insights gained from your experience as well. I truly think that girls have enormous potential that can be reached when they unite and realized that when one girl succeeds, they all do!



MSCA 2009-10 Board Members



President

Carrie Stefanatz, St. Ignatius High School,
PO Box 1540, St. Ignatius, MT 59865
cstefanatz@stignatiusschools.org
Ph: 406-745-3811 x262 Fax: 406-745-3828



President-Elect

Marolane Stevenson, Big Sky High School,
3100 So. Ave. West, Missoula, MT 59804
mstevenson@mcps.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-728-2401



Past-President

Kristy Savaria, Graff Elementary School,
417 E. 6th St., Laurel, MT 59044
Kristy_savaria@laurel.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-628-3452



Elementary School Vice-President

Renee Schoening, Deer Lodge Elementary
444 Montana Ave., Deer Lodge, MT 59722
rschoening@deerlodgeschools.org
Ph: 406-846-1553 x2608



High School Vice-President

Vicki Bisbee, Wolf Point Schools,
213 6th Ave. So., Wolf Point, MT 59201
vbisbee@wolfpoint.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-653-1200 Fax: 406-653-3401



K-12 Vice-President

Lisa Kuehn, Terry Public Schools,
PO Box 187, Terry, MT 59349
lisak@terry.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-635-5533 Fax: 406-635-5705



Middle School Vice-President

Sheri Koyama, Hardin Middle School,
611 W. 5th Street, Hardin, MT 59034
Sheri.koyama@hardin.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-665-6357 Fax: 406-665-1409



Secretary

Erica Zins, Russell Elementary
3216 Russell St., Missoula, MT 59801
eazins@mcps.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-728-4200 Ext. 4830



Treasurer

Laura N. Simpson, Geraldine Schools,
234 Brewster St., Geraldine, MT 59446
lsimpson@geraldine.k12.mt.us
Ph: 406-737-4371 Fax: 406-737-4478

Some Counselors have relocated. Please take a moment to let us know their new address:
lsimpson@geraldine.k12.mt.us

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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