

Marvalee Collins  
Sunnyside Elementary School  
670 Students: Early Childhood through Sixth Grade  
Olathe District Schools  
Olathe, KS

I am so thankful for the most amazing experience of being a 2010 School Counselor of the Year Finalist. After being notified, I was so excited about going to Washington D.C. and meeting the other finalists, their nominators, and the ASCA leadership. Yet, in all that I could imagine, the experience was even more!! From the time I first stepped off the plane into the sunshine of Washington D.C., every moment was memorable.

The ASCA staff provided an unbelievable experience for each of us. The time and planning devoted to making this experience unforgettable was evident as we moved around the city from one wonderful event to the next. Dr. Richard Wong, the executive director of ASCA, set the tone with his leadership and hospitality. Everything we experienced reflected Richard's leadership and what is valued about our profession. Highlights included meeting with Kansas legislators, Dennis Moore and Sam Brownback, spending a morning at the Department of Education with Kevin Jennings, the Director of Safe and Drug Free Schools, touring the Capital, and visiting the ASCA offices.

One of the things I was most excited about was the opportunity to meet all of the other finalists. I learned so much from each one of them. To hear of their dedication to children and about the amazing work they are doing in their schools was an inspiration. We are committed to staying in touch and truly networking through the years to come. It was also wonderful to meet each of the nominators. Hearing their perspective added so much to the already unbelievable experience. Regardless of the issues currently facing counselors, it is clear our profession is in the hands of many dedicated, positive professionals.

Beyond our profession, it was so nice just to know each of the finalists personally. It was fun to share stories and to experience this opportunity together. I'm sure each year the group is special, but I can't imagine a better, more cohesive group of people.

Friday evening was magical and an experience I will always treasure. The Gala Event was at Union Station and was beyond description. My children and their spouses flew into D.C. for the Gala, and I am so thankful I was able to share the event with them. Following the Gala, my family scheduled a tour around the city, and we saw all the sights. It was beautiful seeing everything in lights. I loved all the time in the city and felt so much positive energy.

The snow storms started in D.C. as our trip was ending. After returning to the terminal due to weather conditions, we were on the runway a second time, and my daughter and I were holding our breath as we lifted through the heavy snow. It was hard to leave after such an amazing time, and even now, it all seems so unbelievable that I sometimes wonder if I just imagined it all!

Thank you so very, very much for the honor of representing all the amazing school counselors from across the state of Kansas. Kim Urenda, my nominator and our KSCA President, traveled

with me and was a wonderful friend and colleague through the entire experience. It would not have been the same without her. In everything we did, Kim was an amazing representative for our state and professional organization. I am thankful for the experience in Washington D.C. and for the many acts of hospitality and kindness shown to my family and me. I will always treasure the memories of this amazing experience.

I look forward to working with all of you in the future. I am so excited about the many wonderful ways KSCA and ASCA are supporting and promoting our profession. As members of our professional organizations, we must remember we are doing important work that is critical to our profession and to the children and families we serve. Thank you!!

This summer I will be at the ASCA Convention along with the other finalists. Each of us will have the opportunity to share about our school counseling programs.

Hope to see all of you in Boston this July!!  
Marvalee Collins