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KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

2018 Alaska School Counselor of the Year is Ms. Natali Jones, KPBSD Itinerant Counselor

Soldotna, November 20, 2018—The Alaska School Counselor Association, Inc., announced Ms. Natali Jones from the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is the 2018 School Counselor of the Year. An itinerant counselor, Ms. Jones serves Chapman School, Homer Flex High School, Nanwalek School, Nikolaevsk School, Port Graham School, and Susan B. English School in Seldovia.

“Ms. Jones is an excellent example of how wonderful our counselors are in KPBSD,” said Sean Dusek, KPBSD Superintendent of Schools. “She works hard to support the whole student and is heavily invested in all of her student’s success. This is a well-deserved award and I’m very proud of Natali and all she does for our students!”

In her words...

“The communities that I serve are incredibly diverse. Weekly, I work with Alaska Native villages, a Russian Orthodox village, a township, and an alternative school. I fly to work three days a week and drive the other two. As different as these places are they have many things in common: incredible students, dedicated staff, cultural pride, and caring communities. It can be challenging to serve a school one day a week when there is need for a full time counselor at each site, but it is a gift to be able to work where I do, and for that, I am grateful.” –Natali Jones, KPBSD itinerant counselor, 2018 Alaska School Counselor of the Year

This makes it worthwhile and meaningful...

The most moving part of my work is when students seek out their own wellness and post-secondary success. Whether it is sharing a safety concern, or their dream to become the first person in their family to graduate it takes bravery to speak your truth. I know I am in the right place when I hold the belief that anything is possible.



KPBSD: ONE DISTRICT, FORTY-FOUR DIVERSE SCHOOLS

The mission of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is to empower all learners to positively shape their futures.
ANCHOR POINT COOPER LANDING HOMER HOPE KACHEMAK SELO KENAI MOOSE PASS NANWALEK NIKISKI NIKOLAEVSK NINILCHIK PORT GRAHAM
RAZDOLNA SELDOVIA SEWARD SOLDOTNA STERLING TUSTUMENA TYONEK VOZNESENKA

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Help people hear their story and support ambitions

I became a school counselor in August 2011. My parents, who spent a great deal of their careers as teachers and passionate about working with youth said they were not surprised by my choice—in fact they had been wondering when it was going to happen. I was a peer counselor in middle school. I later pursued careers in journalism, film, and Human Resources. These all had a common thread: helping people tell their stories and supporting their ambitions. School counseling was a very natural next step.

Gratitude

This honor evokes a great deal of gratitude, first to the wonderful students and communities I serve. I have learned such an incredible amount about generosity, dedication, and cultural values. Next to each of those that support my role as school counselor including the incredible teams that make up our schools and a web of support for our students. This includes all employees classified and certified. Without each of these people, I would not be able to do my work.

Influence

School counselors provide supports with academic, career and social-emotional development. I am impacted by those who support my role and those in our district that understand the challenges of small schools including equity of resources.

This is best!

Hands down working with students is the favorite part of my day. As an itinerant, it sometimes looks a little different. It may be online e-mail correspondence, but the best is sitting with a student and supporting their success.

Advocate

I could not do my work without the support and collaboration of my family, friends, colleagues, students, and communities. Truly wrap around services bolster our youth. Each of my schools has a level of need that could justify a full time school counselor. My hope is that school counselor professionals be viewed as an intricate part of student success and safety. I advocate and wish for a school counselor in each school in our district, state, and nation because together we can create change.

Lifelong Learner

I grew up outside of Eugene, Oregon, in the country and went to Harrisburg High School, then graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Spanish (double major) from the University of Oregon. I received Masters of Education in School Counseling from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

- ***Ms. Natali's Counselor Corner:*** <http://believeyoucan.kpbsd.org>
- [November 20, 2018 KPBSD Media Release](#)

“Natali is a tireless advocate for all students, but she also provides a necessary voice for the needs of those attending small schools. She opens doors for our students and helps them find post-secondary fulfillment. Ever the professional, Natali also works to inform the practice of her colleagues and better the profession as a whole.” –Principal Chris Brown, Homer Flex High School

“Natali is a champion for opportunities that benefit the students she serves, and her efforts have not gone unnoticed. Her accolades are well deserved.” –Principal Conrad Woodhead, Chapman School

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