



2018

The Washington Association of School Social Workers is proud to introduce you to the 2018 Distinguished School Social Worker of the Year. Julie Sullenszino has not always been a school social worker. She actually started off her career in 1992 working in outpatient, foster family, and therapeutic placement services in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. From there she spent some time as a therapist in California before moving back to Seattle in 1999. Before transitioning to the school social work profession in 2009, she was a clinical supervisor for Central Youth and Family Services. After completing the school social work course work at the University of Washington, she started working for the Bethel School District.

A former colleague from Nelson Elementary in the Bethel School District, Christine Hartmann, had this to say about Julie:

The love and dedication that Julie has for kids, staff, and the community is evident in all that she does. Julie was one of the first people who I had the privilege of meeting during my first couple of weeks at Nelson Elementary. I was a new teacher at the time and I honestly would not have made it through my first year if it wasn't for her. During her time at Nelson, Julie taught me many skills and strategies to work with my most challenging students. Her way of connecting with kids and staff is unique and unlike any other social worker I've worked with. I didn't know it during my first few months of teaching, but Julie would become an amazing mentor and friend. Although I always knew she did what was best for kids, I later found out that she would help me decide what was best for myself. Julie helped me make one of the toughest decisions that I've faced thus far in my life - to take care of my dying mother while leaving a classroom full of children in the last months of school. After

deciding to care for my mom, Julie made sure to have staff and students send me kind words and gifts. She regularly checked in on me and called to just say hello. To this day, our similar journeys are something that has continued to bond us. Julie is more than a social worker. She is a true friend and an incredible example of how one person can truly make a difference in the lives of others.

Julie currently works for Seattle Public Schools as a Social Emotional Discipline Case Manager. Katie May, principal of Thurgood Marshall Elementary, had this to say about Julie's work at her school last year:

Julie is an unstoppable force once she is connected to a student. Last spring, Julie turned things around for a child at my school through sheer determination. The student had demonstrated progressively more concerning behaviors over the course of a year and I was really worried about what would happen when she moved on to Middle School this year. Julie met with her twice a week, regularly spoke to her grandmother, therapist, her teacher and me. She helped to create a plan of support, and worked with all of us to be sure that the adults were following through with the plan (we all know that can be harder than the work with students!). Julie never gave up, and the student left us at the end of the school year much better prepared to handle the challenges of Middle School in a healthier way. I know that Julie changed the outcomes for this child, and we could not have done it without her.

And lastly, Pat Sander, the Executive Director of Coordinated School Health for Seattle Public Schools had this to say:

Julie ALWAYS put students first! In every story that comes back to central office from school staff there is always one common theme. Julie knows the student by story, strength, and need and as a result adds student voice or makes sure the student voice is present so it can influence adult dialogue. She has the keen ability to move students along the developmental social emotional continuum from dependent to independent.

Julie has served as conference chair, membership chair, secretary, advocated on behalf of WASSW during several legislative sessions (making treats, setting up appointments with House of Representatives and Senators, designing materials/handouts, and testifying on behalf of HB 1377/HB 1900). She was responsible for revamping and organizing the biannual WASSW newsletter and maintaining the website. Even though she stepped away from the board last year, she is still very much involved behind the scenes helping out with special projects. Julie has always been a consistent, reliable, and supportive WASSW team member.