

Welcome Message from President Suzanne Smith...

I am honored and humbled to be the 2009-2010 President of the New York State Association of School Nurses. I welcome this journey, to lead NYSASN and to advocate for the role of a school nurse.

I would like to say thank you to President Diane Lightfoote- for your guidance in the past year and my appreciation of the personal character and strength that you have displayed in leading our organization. I look forward to working with June Janssen to whom we are fortunate to have as a steward for our organization's finances.

Welcome aboard Diane McGranor as the incoming secretary of NYSASN. Diane McGranor and I come from areas of the state that are close to the Canadian border and we would want you to know that the borders are well protected. *(If you were at the Fall conference banquet, you got to see a picture of barking dogs on both sides of the border fence. This was merely well meaning humor as both Suzanne and Diane love dogs.)*

Welcome aboard Sue Depan as President-Elect.

Congratulations again to Deb Ilardi, the NYSASN Judith Harrigan Award recipient. Deb continues her studies for a master's degree in nursing. Even though Deb is retiring from her school nurse job, we all know that she will continue to impact school nursing wherever she goes. In any case, thank you Deb for the fun and friendship and your proactive stance for school nurses. Best wishes for a Happy Retirement.

The mission of the New York State Association of School Nurses is to advance the practice of school nursing and enhance the educational success of students by promoting quality health services. I believe that this mission statement speaks volumes as to why there should be a registered professional nurse in every school building. And I am going to do all in my power as President of NYSASN to work with the Board of Directors to promote this.

NYSASN is an organization made up of volunteers and I commend the endless hours that school nurses donate to this professional organization. It is important for us all to remember that we, too, need balance in our everyday lives. NYSASN is only as good as its base. I know that there are wonderful school nurses across NYS that would enhance our organization. If you know one of these nurses. please tell them about us and our website. For \$55.00 per year, all school nurses should join their professional organization.

A school nurse advocates for the education of the whole child. The socio-emotional and physical needs of every student in the school setting are vital to the success of the student transitioning to adult life. Whether our practice setting is the preschool elementary, middle or junior-senior-high setting, advocating for the education of the whole child/adolescent/teenager is important. It is noteworthy that the President of the New York State Council of Educational Associations (NYSCEA) was pleased to announce that the new commissioner of Education, Dr.

David Steiner, is very interested in the concept of education of the whole child, which in turn, may indicate more recognition of the role of the School Nurse.

In October 2008, there was a Governor's Summit on the topic of Student Engagement and Dropout Prevention for NYS at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. The discussion was about the more a student is engaged in school and involved in service learning the more apt the student would be to remain in school and graduate. The NYS graduation rate last year was and is again this year at 55%. To further understand this, labor statistics per Dr. Paul Harrington, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University at the "NYC Multiple Pathways to Success: Graduation and Beyond" Summit held in March 2009 provided the following information:

- The economy today has become a less forgiving place; it now more drastically favors those with high levels of schooling and punishes those with low levels of schooling.
- Educational attainment is the number one sorting mechanism among what people earn.
- Getting a bachelor's degree represents a 400% return on investment.
- Average lifetime earnings for a high school dropout would be \$626,470.
- Average lifetime earnings for someone with a master's degree would be about \$3,567,292.

I share this information because we, as school nurses, are stakeholders in the educational success of students. Our services help to identify needs as well as provide health promotion and health prevention that hopefully a student utilizes after graduation and throughout life.

We all have a story to tell. A story is personal. I am a school nurse from Zone 9 in Upstate NY. This past week, MSNBC "Morning Joe" referred to my zone as the NY 23rd. The nation watched this race as a showcase for Americans speaking out against government control of health care. My zone encompasses Jefferson County including Fort Drum, NY and so, school nurses in my zone observe firsthand the stress and/or resiliency that our soldiers and families display from the various wars the US is engaged in; as families lose one or more parents /caregivers to deployments, and these soldiers return home to family members some with disabilities such as Post-traumatic stress syndrome, many are faced with marital disharmony (a very high divorce rate), and even worse experience a life lost and grieve. There is also an increasing depression and suicide rate among military soldiers. It is a challenge for these children to be successful in school with the added distractions of military lifestyle. Yet, we also see military families thrive.

Zone 9 also includes the counties of St. Lawrence and Lewis counties. I grew up in the Foothills of the western Adirondacks. I wish to share an article, "We're not Poor..." from the American Journal of Nursing, November 2007 written by a Dr. Daniel Way, a physician's lens, depicting life in the Adirondacks with a picture of a poor Adirondack family on the cover of the magazine. The author is a rural doctor in the Adirondacks and also contributes articles and photography in the popular magazine, Adirondack Life. Dr. Way also has a book entitled: All in a Day's work: Scenes and Stories from an Adirondack Practice." Dr. Way was pleased that I wished to share his article with other School Nurses in NYS and sent me a CD with a reprint of the article and pictures featured in the article to share this evening. Dr. Way writes...

Whatever our setting in NYS, school nurses can relate to this story, because we are on the front lines and deal with needs and safety of NYS children and their families every day we are in school. I challenge every zone to write a story about your zone and submit the letter to the Legislative committee for sharing with legislative representatives. All of our zones are important.

This year school nurses will be in the spotlight and will hopefully bring positive attention to the everyday practice in the school health office. Emerging infections and flu and budget cuts will be a challenge. In a recent NASN poll (October 16, 2009 weekly e-mail article update) it was noted that school nurses have a higher compliance rate for flu vaccination- 86% than other health care professionals nation-wide. This should not be a surprise since school nurses spend a great deal of their practice in health promotion and prevention.

I do have some specific goals this year as President.

1. To promote a mandate (with creative funding) for a School Nurse in every School building in NYS.
2. To continue to promote NYSASN and to increase membership among NYS School Nurses. I am excited that at last count we are at 812 members and the number is increasing!
3. To promote School Nursing through NYSASN position papers specifically, identifying how to work effectively with School Based Clinics. Look for surveys to help NYSASN gather data on this issue.
4. To support Professional development especially the annual School Nurse Orientation Program and NYSASN regional one day workshops to assist school nurses to keep current with their clinical practice of school nursing.
5. To explore and better utilize technology with regard to running meetings efficiently and communicating with the Board of Directors and you, the membership.

Thank you Gail Hall and zone 11 for this wonderful conference. I look forward to this year. I wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving blessed with family and great food.

Thank you.

Suzanne Smith RN BSN NCSN
President of the New York State Association of School Nurses.