



PRESS RELEASE

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**Alaska Association of Student Governments
Earns National Recognition for Service Project**

**AASG Recognized for Engaging
Student Councils in Service Statewide**

[Anchorage, AK] – The Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG) has been named the 2011 winner of the Ardis Kyker State Service Project Award by the National Association of Student Councils (NASC). The award is presented annually by NASC and recognizes a NASC-affiliated state student council association for its organizing and sponsoring of a statewide service project that engages its membership in support of a common charity or cause.

The Award is named for Ardis Kyker, who for more than 20 years coordinated the state student council and National Honor Society associations in Minnesota. The Kyker Award challenges state associations to clearly articulate their project goals, planning processes, implementation

strategies, and evaluation methods. Two other key elements are project outcomes and the levels to which member student councils participate in the projects.

The Alaska Association for Student Governments served its mission to develop student leadership through training, advocacy, and service by developing and implementing their statewide Suicide Prevention Campaign. Executive Board member Rachel Gulanes (from Unalaska) and Committee Co-Chair Tessa Baldwin (from Kotzebue and a Mt. Edgecumbe student) completed the award application.

The Suicide Prevention Campaign was designed to raise awareness and student advocacy for suicide prevention in Alaska's schools. The project was sparked by one of the AASG student board members telling a personal tragedy of having a high school friend commit suicide. Combined with the fact that Alaska has the highest teen and young adult suicide rate in the country, especially with Alaska Native youth, the student-led Executive Board felt compelled to launch their state project on teen suicide prevention. To plan and implement the project and engage their state members, the members of the AASG board participated in special training from suicide prevention experts, offered workshops, sponsored a media contest, engaged in an on-line suicide prevention simulation program, and involved conference delegates in suicide prevention debate and other activities.

At the 2011 Spring Conference, the General Assembly's key accomplishment was to debate and pass suicide prevention training resolutions. One of the resolution stated that all teachers in Alaska need suicide prevention training, and another resolution advocates for the implementation of the online simulation suicide prevention program Kognito/At Risk at a total cost of only \$12,000 per year. AASG representatives will present these resolutions to the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development for recommended implementation.

More than half of AASG member schools participated in the suicide prevention project, and many expanded their involvement with the state association by launching suicide prevention activities in their own buildings, thus raising awareness of this serious issue facing Alaska's teens.

The Media Contest garnered over 30 entries. AASG partnered with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and GCI to select the top videos for airing on Alaska stations. Training in suicide prevention reached over 1500 youth during AASG leadership Conferences. In addition, many schools offered suicide prevention activities. AASG is now planning suicide prevention training to take place at the Fall Conference at Service High School October 13-15, 2011.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Student Councils applaud AASG's outstanding efforts to engage its membership, and for its "Suicide Prevention" Campaign, which is making difference and saving the lives of teens. For more information on the National Association of Student Councils, visit www.nasc.us.

About NASC

The National Association of Student Councils ® (NASC) provides resources, programs, and recognition to develop and support student council leaders and advisers. NASC believes that student council is the voice of the student body and is dedicated to preparing and empowering student leaders to serve their schools and communities through service and civic engagement. For more information, visit www.nasc.us.

About NASSP

In existence since 1916, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the preeminent organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders from across the United States and more than 45 countries around the world. NASSP's mission is to promote excellence in school leadership. The National Association of Student Councils ®, The National Honor Society ®, National Junior Honor Society ®, and National Elementary Honor Society ® are all NASSP programs. For more information about NASSP, located in Reston, Virginia, visit www.principals.org or call 703-860-0200.

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