

**EDUCATION**

# GASN announces recipients of School Health Hero, School Nurse of the Year awards

The Georgia Association of School Nurses (GASN) has announced the two recipients of its annual School Health Hero Awards—Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle and Cathalene Teahan, a registered nurse and consultant who advocates the Georgia state legislature on public health issues.



**Cynthia Walston**, who serves 900 K-5 students in **Hollis Hand Elementary** and **Hoganville Elementary** (Troup County Schools), and its **2011 School Nurse Administrator of the Year Award** to **Lynne Meadows**, **Coordinator of Student Health Services for Fulton County Schools**, as well as inducting a new slate of officers, during GASN's 19th Annual Statewide Education Conference at the **Wyndham Peachtree**

**GASN** also presented its 2011 School Nurse of the Year Award to **Cynthia Walston**, who serves 900 K-5 students in

Conference Center in Peachtree City.

The School Health Hero Awards were started last year to honor outstanding individuals outside of the school nurse profession who actively supported the key role school nurses play to improve health outcomes for students and school staff statewide, said GASN President Carol Darsey who also serves as lead nurse for Liberty County Schools.

"In 2010-11, GASN developed many key partnerships," she added. "These individuals passionately understand that good health is fundamental to increasing the attendance and academic achievement of our school-aged children and supporting teachers and staff."

Lt. Governor Cagle was honored for founding the Healthy Kids Georgia program, which strives to reduce childhood rates for being overweight or obese in Georgia, the second highest ranking state in the nation in both categories according to a 2011 report from Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). An epidemic 32% of Georgia



Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle and Cathalene Teahan, a registered nurse and consultant, were recognized recently by the Georgia Association of School Nurses.

children are obese/overweight, contributing to an increase in Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and strokes, Darsey said.

Healthy Kids Georgia strives to increase physical and wellness activities and encourages schools to join the national Healthy Schools Program, an initiative of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a national nonprofit founded in 2005 by

the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation.

Legislative consultant Cathalene Teahan has helped school nurses keep up to date on all pending state legislation that could affect their practice or the health of Georgia schoolchildren. "This year she represented school nurses tirelessly and passionately on the issue of state funding, helping educate elected officials about the key role school nurses play in their children's health, wellness and academic achievement," Darsey said. "Her efforts led to school nurse program state funding being reduced by just 4% in fiscal year 2012, rather than an originally proposed 10%, in a year when Georgia faced serious budget challenges."

The School Nurse of the Year Awards recognize nurses who display outstanding service and commitment to their school and community. Cynthia "Cindi" Walston treats much more than playground scrapes. For example, she assists with three-times-daily urinary catheterizations for one student and provides hands-on care and teaching to another with insulin-dependent

diabetes and that student's family. She also trains and monitors the health aide who provides that care when she's at her other assigned school.

Walston also initiated several creative new programs in her schools, including the screening of a fun educational video about the importance of hand-washing to prevent germ spread and a medical alert flagging system that identifies children with chronic disease. The latter has helped teachers ensure that children with special needs receive proper assessment and care.

Lynne Meadows provided leadership in developing and implementing the school nurse program for Fulton County Schools, the state's fourth largest district with 103 schools, serving 90,000+ students. She supervises and closely collaborates with 13 registered nurses who work in geographic clusters and six additional RNs who primarily aid medically fragile special education students.

Among Meadows' many accomplishments, she partnered with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to develop a detailed action plan which

allowed the district to remain focused on learning during the recent H1N1 flu outbreak. She also has worked closely with district cabinet members and principals to ensure that students receive immunizations on time without unnecessary absences.

In addition to Darsey, the new GASN officers who took office at the conference include Meadows, serving as Treasurer; President-Elect Karen Bell (school nurse, Camden County); State Director Anne Coyle (Nursing Supervisor, Cobb County Schools); and Secretary Denise Eady (School Nurse Supervisor- Griffin-Spalding County Schools). They are serving a two-year term from July 2011 to July 2013.

The Georgia Association of School Nurses (GASN) was organized in 1991 to unite school nurses committed to providing quality health care services to school children. GASN remains dedicated to promoting excellence in school health through its continued education programs and advocacy. For more information, visit [www.gasn.org](http://www.gasn.org).