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Monroe's Mary Myers Awarded School Nurse Administrator Award

Monroe, WA – Honored and humbled was the response of Mary Myers, the Assistant Director of Health Services at Monroe Public Schools, after being awarded "School Nurse Administrator of the Year" at the recent conference of the School Nurse Organization of Washington (SNOW). Myers has been working as a nurse in Monroe's public schools for almost 30 years starting when her children, now grown with youngsters of their own, attended school at Maltby Elementary School.

The role of a school nurse is to eliminate health-related barriers to learning. She began her career as a pediatric nurse at Seattle Children's Hospital and Woodinville Pediatrics before hearing of an open school position. "I thought, 'I'll do this for a short time and move on,'" she said. "I never dreamt I'd be staying for a lifetime."

"I look at the work I do as a shared role, with my administrative team, my colleagues and the community that work side by side with me," she said. "I've had the opportunity to work with such wonderful people. If you have the willingness to be collaborative, you can do really great things. To be recognized was quite an honor."

For students with chronic illness or disability, their relationship with the school nurse can start from as young as 3 years old until they leave school as old as age 21.

Myers has a master's degree in curriculum and instruction and has been very active in the district's K-12 curriculum relishing the opportunity to work with community partners to establish a process for appropriate education in terms of sensitive areas of health instruction, i.e. sex instruction and HIV/AIDS.

She was instrumental in introducing LifeSkills Training, a school-based substance abuse prevention program that has become a national model, as well as expanding a threat assessment protocol for situations where a student may be a danger to him/herself or others. "It's a very systematic process endorsed by the FBI and the Secret Service," she said. "We call it a *student safety* assessment process, because for us the emphasis is on the positive – identification and intervening to support the student. Often a student is simply trying to ask for help."