

ACPS School Nurse Named Virginia School Nurse of the Year



School Nurse Stefani Lailari, of James K. Polk Elementary School, has been named Virginia Nurse of the Year. This prestigious award, which honors school nursing excellence, was presented to Lailari at the Virginia Association of School Nurses conference this weekend.

Lailari has been a nurse for 30 years and a school nurse for the past 10 years. She started as a substitute nurse before joining Jefferson-Houston, where she served for five years. She has been a school nurse at James K. Polk for the past three years.

It's the best job ever. The best thing about school nursing is the kids. They are so wonderful. They bring me to school every day. Case management is really important to me because I work with kids from all over the world who's families don't know our medical system. Helping families navigate our complicated medical system, whether vision, dental or medical, and putting all of the pieces together gives me a real sense of satisfaction," said Lailari.

The care coordinated by school nurses can include everything from connecting families with the language line, to providing information about insurance options, to ordering glasses and more.

Every child deserves a school nurse. I really appreciate that every school in our division has a school nurse, demonstrating a real commitment to wellness in our schools. Students are better able to succeed academically. Student wellness is directly connected to student success," said Lailari.

Lailari participated in the Johnson & Johnson health leadership program, which required the creation of a sustained change plan for your school division. As a result, she was part of a team

from ACPS that was instrumental in getting [employee health](#) into the [ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan](#). [ACPS Finding Fit](#) and the wellness champions in our schools evolved out of this work.

Lailari was also instrumental in the implementation of the Wellness on Wheels (WOW) bus. Lailari's father was a dentist, so oral health has always been an important part of her life. She observed that many students in Alexandria had poor oral health and spoke with Robin Wallin, the former Health Services Coordinator, about the issue. This ultimately led to the WOW Bus and its use as a means of providing dental services for ACPS students.

The WOW bus has completed 1,200 dental treatments, including treatment of cavities, root canals on ACPS students. Poor dental health is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. Thanks to the WOW bus, these children are in their seats, attentive and ready to learn," said Barbara Nowak, Health Services Coordinator for ACPS.