



TESU Nursing Student Earns American School Health Association's School Health Professional of the Year Award

Kelly Saccomanno, TESU Associate Director, Office of Communications

Sheila Caldwell, RN, a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) student in the W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing and Health Professions at Thomas Edison State University (TESU), has been awarded the American School Health Association's (ASHA) School Health Professional of the Year Award. The national award was presented to Caldwell during ASHA's annual ceremony in Pittsburgh, Pa., on Oct. 17.

"It's humbling to have ASHA's leadership recognize my work in school health and community service," said Caldwell, who also holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from TESU. "I am proud the award highlights my dedication to the children, families, communities, and schools I serve and validates my commitment to empowering others – especially my school nurse colleagues."

A certified school nurse since 2005, Caldwell currently serves the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District in Matawan, N.J. A recognized proponent of public and community health initiatives, she is a team leader, conference moderator, online community administrator, blogger, and podcaster. Through her educational and networking endeavors, she has been a valuable resource for school nurses.

According to ASHA, the award recognizes individuals who exemplify the "whole school, whole community, whole child" approach in K-12 educational settings. Candidates for the honor include teachers, school counselors, bus drivers, school nurses and social workers who demonstrate a commitment to advancing school health education, advocacy

and research.

"The role of school nurses is increasingly complex, but the ability to improve the lives of the children, families and those in the community we serve is enormously rewarding," Caldwell said. "Over time, I have realized that sharing my knowledge and experiences with others is my ministry. That will be part of my legacy and impact individuals I may never know."

In addition to her ASHA distinction, Caldwell was selected earlier this year by NJBiz as the recipient of that publication's Nurse of the Year Award. The distinction recognizes excellence, promotes innovation and honors the efforts of individuals making a positive impact on the quality of health in N.J. Her other accolades include the NJ State Governor's Jefferson Award in 2022 and the New Jersey State Nurses Association (NJSNA) Institute for Nursing's Diva Award for Professional and Nurse Excellence in 2022.

"We are immensely proud of Sheila for these distinctions," said Lorraine Chewey, Ed.D., RN, associate dean of Undergraduate Nursing Programs at the School. "She is a committed and focused student in our MSN in Nursing Education program and a valued colleague with her heart and mind firmly planted in nursing pedagogy and leadership. She is a model of nursing excellence and advocacy in our profession."

Caldwell has more than 30 years of experience in health care settings, including critical care, case management, med-surg and community education. She is a Certified School Nurse, a Certified Child

Care Health Consultant, and a Fellow of the National Academy of School Nursing. She serves as an instructor and field nurse for Comfort Care Home Healthcare Services, Keyport, N.J.; a registered nurse educator in Community Outreach for Hackensack Meridian Health Network, Wall, N.J.; an NJ FamilyCare Medicaid Community Ambassador and co-chairs the Lead-free New Jersey Health Committee, Trenton, N.J. Her professional memberships encompass the National Association of School Nurses, the American Nurses Association, the New Jersey State School Nurses Association, NJSNA's Addressing Racism in Nursing Task Force, the Monmouth County School Nurses Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics – Council of School Health. She is a member of the Tau Chi Chapter of the Chi Eta Phi Sorority Inc. She has also authored or co-authored numerous publications targeted at school nurses and presented nationally on subjects ranging from pediatric health and safety to nurse leadership and equity issues.

Concurrent with her MSN degree pursuit, Caldwell is enrolled in TESU's [Nurse Preceptor Certificate Program](#), designed for post-BSN degree registered nurses interested in becoming certified psychiatric/mental health nursing preceptors. ■