



SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 1, 2016

Program Provides Parents with Resources and Training

When Amy Morff applied to attend the Parent Leadership Institute (PLI), she hoped to meet other parents, to hear about available resources, and to learn how to effectively advocate for her child.

“I was successful in learning all of these things,” said Morff, the parent of a second-grader who receives services from SSD at North Glendale Elementary School in the Kirkwood School District.

Morff said through the PLI, she made new friends and gained a bigger support system. “It was great to hear others’ stories and experiences and to see that there are so many things that we have in common.”

The PLI provides training to parents of children with disabilities on topics designed to help them with their child’s educational journey. Training ranges from how to be a part of a productive meeting to how to positively interact and collaborate with other parents and school officials.

Participants, who are chosen through an application process, attend three full days of training on Saturdays once a month for three months during the fall. The PLI is presented by the SSD Parent Education and Diversity Awareness Program.

John Wagner, whose sixth-grade son receives services from SSD at Parkway Northeast Middle School, was hoping to learn more about people with disabilities in the St. Louis area when he participated in the PLI last year. He also wanted to expand his knowledge of autism beyond his and his wife’s experiences with the disability.

“It was interesting to hear from older people with various disabilities and to hear from them directly — what their experiences and challenges have been,” said Wagner of the PLI discussion led by several adults with disabilities. “It also was great to meet other parents. We talked about our own triumphs and pitfalls. It evolved into a support group of sorts and we shared resources and strategies.”

For PLI graduate Tanyathorn Hauwashanasuk, participation in the institute helped increase her knowledge and awareness of disabilities, which led to better advocacy skills. Hauwashanasuk uses these skills, along with her cultural and educational background, to help other parents of children who receive services from SSD.



SSD PARENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE APPLY BY APRIL 19

Download the application at http://bit.ly/PLI_application or contact LaTrisa Morgan at 314.989.8194 or by email at lamorgan@ssdmo.org.

“With my Chinese-Thai cultural background and ability to speak Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), I established good rapport with diverse families during the PLI,” said Hauwashanasuk. “Parents felt comfortable sharing their concerns, expectations and hopes for their children with me.”

The PLI experience also prompted Hauwashanasuk, whose son receives services from SSD in the Parkway School District, to become even more committed to helping her child and others with disabilities by promoting inclusion, disability awareness, disability diversity and social justice.

The PLI is now accepting applications for its 2016 program to be held in three sessions on Sept. 10, Oct. 8 and Nov. 12. There is no cost to participate.

Applications are due by **April 19**. Parents from St. Louis County whose children receive special education or 504 services, First Steps and early childhood services are encouraged to apply.

The PLI was funded entirely by the Special Education Foundation from its inception in 2007 through last year. To date, 172 parents and guardians have graduated from the institute. ■

SPECIAL OLYMPICS CREATES MEMORIES FOR ATHLETES AND VOLUNTEERS



At SSD, the benefit of the Special Olympics program for student athletes goes beyond improving sports skills and competitive abilities.

“Special Olympics provides so many opportunities for learning and growth for our students — from increasing self-esteem and self-confidence, to making new friends and developing skills for lifetime participation in sports and athletic programs,” said Kerrie Townsend, SSD Special Olympics facilitator.

Like most other Special Olympians, SSD student athletes can participate in such sports as soccer, basketball, track and field, bowling, volleyball, swimming, softball and bocce

ball. Unlike other programs, however, SSD’s Special Olympics program is part of the curriculum for students during the school day, and boasts a large group of teen-aged volunteers who plan and host events at local high schools.

“Special Olympics is awesome because it helps everyone in a good way,” said Isaiah James, a senior at SSD’s Neuwoehner High School.

The classroom-based approach to Special Olympics allows teachers the opportunity to include Special Olympics materials in the classroom and then to reinforce the learning activities through Special Olympics events.

“It allows them the ability to do hands-on learning with their students,” said Townsend. “It gives the teacher another avenue to see their students shine, whether it is interacting and socializing with their buddy, another athlete or another teacher from another school, winning a medal or standing up in front of all attendees to give a speech or present a plaque.”

More than 5,000 volunteers, including high-school students, help make SSD’s Special Olympics program possible. Students from partner district high schools or private schools volunteer to plan and host athletic events at their schools. Planning includes matching each athlete with a hosting-school buddy for the day.

The day’s activities frequently include more than the athletic competition, with many schools providing extras like game booths and crafts.

“It was kind of cool to get to know my buddy and learn that we like to play the same video games,” said Isaiah, who recently participated in a Special Olympics bowling event that paired Neuwoehner students with students from St. Margaret Mary.

Neuwoehner physical education teacher Patrick Green said he enjoys preparing his students for the Special Olympics each year.

“We love it when our students interact with the students putting on the event,” he said. “It allows our students to get a different feel of how other schools work together as a team.”

SSD’s Special Olympics program began in 1987 with a grant from Special Olympics International, Special Olympics Missouri and funding from the District. More than 2,900 SSD students are participating in Special Olympics this year. ■



Event Offers Families One-Stop Access to Disability Resources

SSD's Parent Education and Diversity Awareness Program will sponsor the North County Disability Resource Fair on April 20.

The event is scheduled for 4–7 p.m. at the Riverview Gardens Family and Community Resource Center, 1160 St. Cyr Road, St. Louis, MO 63137. It will feature information about programs and resources from SSD and other community agencies.

Attendees will have the chance to learn more about topics such as respite care, recreation opportunities, health care and other community resources.



Participants will include SSD's Parent Education and Diversity Awareness Program, the Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis, St. Louis Regional Office and a wide array of nonprofit providers.

The event is free and open to the public. Registration is not required to attend. For more information, call 314.989.8194 (711 Deaf/HOH). ■

SEF Women Leaders Boutique, Fashion Show and Luncheon

The Special Education Foundation (SEF) Women Leaders will host their annual Spring Fashion Show and Luncheon on April 5 at the Sheraton Westport Chalet.

Proceeds from the event support scholarships for students with disabilities and provide funding for programs at SSD's special education schools. In 2015, event proceeds provided \$7,500 for initiatives including an after-school program, a clothing and financial assistance fund, and student activities.

The boutique will open at 10 a.m., with the luncheon to follow at noon. The fashion show will begin at 12:45 p.m. Tickets are \$75 per person.

Visit http://bit.ly/sef_fashion for event details and to register. ■

Special Education Foundation
Success Beyond the Classroom

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MISSION: In collaboration with partner districts, we provide technical education and a wide variety of individualized educational and support services designed for each student's successful contribution to our community.

VISION: Partners for every student's success

VALUES: student success • collaboration
• integrity • stewardship • continuous improvement • equity

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NEWS FROM SSD



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COMING UP @ SSD

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: DEALING WITH MY GREATEST FEARS

3-part workshop
March 30, April 6 and April 13,
6:30-9 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Room 60

This workshop series is designed to provide information to students and their families about the transition process and issues that cause anxiety for parents when planning for the post-school years.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING – UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S DIFFICULTIES WITH ORGANIZATION, TIME, MEMORY AND INITIATING TASKS

April 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
SSD Central Office, Room 60

Parents will receive tools for understanding executive functioning and helping their children build some of these skills at home.

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT GUARDIANSHIP

April 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
SSD Central Office, Room 61

If you are considering guardianship as your son or daughter turns 18, this family-centered training will give you an opportunity to learn about Missouri's guardianship options and alternatives and will equip you with tools to help decide what kind of decision-making supports and/or protection a person might need. Participants will also learn about what alternatives or options might work best for each person's unique needs and situation.

For more information about these events or to register, visit <http://bit.ly/ssdworkshops> or call 314.989.7807 or 711 (Deaf/HOH).