



SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 4, 2018

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Mentoring Fosters Students' Friendship

Fitting in at school can be tough for many students. When you look different, it can be even more difficult.

For Raymundo Utrera, the transition to Bierbaum Elementary School in the Mehlville School District was made much easier with the help of Kamryn Perry, a recent graduate of Mehlville High School.

Both students have Treacher Collins Syndrome, a rare medical condition in which some bones and tissues in the face aren't developed.

Kamryn said when he heard that a new student with Treacher Collins would be attending Bierbaum, he knew he wanted to get involved in his life. He went to Bierbaum before Raymundo started school to talk to the other students and educate them about Treacher Collins.

"When I first walked into each class, they were shocked. But by the time I was done they knew I was no different than them. This helped Raymundo a lot because it gave the kids in his class a heads up and taught them to not treat him any less than they would any other classmate," said Kamryn.

A special friendship was formed. Kamryn regularly tutored Raymundo and served as his Special Olympics buddy. When they first met, Raymundo said he thought, "Wow! He looks like me." He added, "I am happy to know someone else who is similar to me and understands what I go through."

Raymundo said that Kamryn makes sure he is confident around other people and that Kamryn believes in him. "It feels like Kamryn is my older brother."

Raymundo's mother, Arlin Flores said, "Kamryn has helped Raymundo with his self-esteem. He has helped him to understand that he is not the only kid with special needs or challenges. It's special because he found someone like him."

Kamryn's mom, Tori Perry, is also grateful for the friendship and proud that her son has become a mentor. "Kamryn has not met many



Raymundo Utrera (left) and Kamryn Perry (right)

people in person who have Treacher Collins. It is really special that he cannot only help others, but help someone younger than he is who goes through some of the exact same challenges in life," said Perry.

Kamryn plans to attend St. Louis Community College at Meramec to study special education and math. He participated in the Missouri A+ Scholarship Program, which provides scholarship funds to graduates who complete a combination of tutoring and community service and who meet grade point average and attendance requirements.

"We hope Kamryn is able to use his experiences to relate to families and students that he will encounter," said Tori Perry, who is excited that her son wants to get a special education teaching degree.

Kamryn said he really enjoyed tutoring Raymundo as well as other students at Bierbaum. "I always enjoy seeing these kids improve as I tutor them through the year," he said. "I enjoy working with them because they make me smile, and I like to make them laugh and smile, too." ■

This issue of Special Edition features important dates, resources and opportunities for families. We hope it will serve as a yearlong reference to help you plan for the upcoming school year and all it has to offer.

SAVE YOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE EXPERTS



SSD's Parent Education and Diversity Awareness Program offers families a variety of opportunities to learn more about special education and disabilities through educational workshops, District resources, referrals, resource fairs and other special events.

A variety of free workshops are offered on topics ranging from basic sign language and teaching kids social skills to college preparation and understanding the IEP process. For more information about these events or to register, visit www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/workshops.html

The Family & Community Resource Center (FCRC) provides a vast array of special education and disability-related tools and resources for SSD families and the community at large. The FCRC's collection includes thousands of books, journals, videos, resource packets and more. For details, visit www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/fcrc.html ■

SAVE MONEY

SSD, the Special Education Foundation, the Bonhomme Lions and a variety of other organizations offer scholarships to SSD students. Applications can be found on the SSD website beginning in September at www.ssdmo.org. Application deadlines start in January. ■

SSD Parent Advisory Council

The SSD Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is comprised of families advising and collaborating to improve the education, confidence and social outcomes of each student served by SSD.

The PAC consists of five parents or guardians — one member and four alternates — from each of the 22 St. Louis County school districts and from each of the five SSD special education schools. The parents or guardians of students receiving special education services in that district or school elect SSD PAC members.

For more information, visit the PAC's website at <https://tinyurl.com/SSDPAC>, email pac@ssdmo.org or call 314.989.8448 ext. 6650. ■

LET'S TALK – TELL US WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND

Let's Talk is an online tool that allows you to submit feedback at your convenience directly to the SSD staff member who can help. Just visit the SSD website at www.ssdmo.org and look for the Let's Talk button on the homepage.

Once you click on the Let's Talk link, you'll be able to choose an interest area related to the message that you want to submit. Let us know what's going well, offer suggestions, submit a concern or make a general comment.

As we work to continuously improve the District's communication with stakeholders, we look forward to starting a conversation with you.

Let's Talk!®

SAVE THE DATE: CALENDAR FOR SSD SCHOOLS*

AUG. 13, 2018
First day of school for students <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
SEPT. 3, 2018
School closed in observance of Labor Day <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
SEPT. 14, 2018
Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance <i>(special education schools/programs)</i>
OCT. 12, 2018
Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
NOV. 21 – 23, 2018
School closed in observance of Thanksgiving <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
DEC. 21, 2018
Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
WINTER BREAK:
<i>North Tech & South Tech:</i>
• Dec. 24, 2018 – Jan. 2, 2019
• Jan. 3, 2019: Students return from Winter Break
<i>Special Education Schools/Programs:</i>
• Dec. 24, 2018 – Jan. 4, 2019
• Jan. 7, 2019: Students return from Winter Break
JAN. 21, 2019
School closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
FEB. 15, 2019
School closed <i>(North Tech & South Tech)</i>
FEB. 18, 2019
School closed in observance of Presidents Day <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
MARCH 18 – 22, 2019
Spring Break <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
MARCH 28–29, 2019
Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance <i>(North Tech & South Tech)</i>
APRIL 19, 2019
Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
APRIL 22, 2019
Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance <i>(special education schools/programs)</i> • School closed <i>(North Tech & South Tech)</i>
MAY 23, 2019
Last day of school for students <i>(special education schools/programs, North Tech & South Tech)</i>
JUNE 3, 2019
Summer school begins <i>(if there are no make-up snow days)</i>

* Students that attend school in a partner district follow the school calendar of the partner district. Visit www.ssdmo.org/ssd_services/schools.html for links to partner district websites.

Community-based transition sites follow the SSD school calendar above.



Special Education Foundation

Success Beyond the Classroom

Racing for Kids

SSD employee Barb Nash is raising money to send kids to camp in conjunction with running her first full marathon in Iceland on Aug. 18. Her goal is to raise enough to fund 26 camperships for students with disabilities — one for each mile of the marathon. It's not too late to help her reach that goal. Make your gift of any amount at www.sef-stl.org/donate and put Barb Nash in the tribute line. Visit www.sef-stl.org/programs/camperships for information about the Special Education Foundation's camperships.



Barb Nash (left) with her sister, Maureen Neukirch, when they ran a 5K in March 2015. It was a virtual 5K at the same time as the Michigan Cystic Fibrosis Foundation run.

Cornhole Bean Bag Games Among Items in Golf Tournament Silent Auction

Thanks to students in the Construction and Outdoor Maintenance program at SSD's South Technical High School, who made several sets of cornhole beanbag toss games that will be up for bid in the silent auction at the Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament to Benefit the Special Education Foundation. Teacher Paul Heumann designed the games, and the students built them. Each game is decorated in a St. Louis Cardinals, St. Louis Blues or Mizzou theme.

Anyone can bid on the games or other silent auction items online at <http://sef2018.givesmart.com>. The golf tournament will be held on Monday, Oct. 8, at Norwood Hills Country Club. For information about the tournament, to register or to sponsor the event, visit www.sef-stl.org/events/dan-mclaughlin-golf-tournament.

Funds for Adaptive Equipment

When students graduate or reach age 21, any adaptive equipment they use stays with SSD. Through a generous grant from The Tilles Foundation, SEF has funds to provide adaptive equipment to students transitioning from school to work. To apply, visit www.sef-stl.org/programs.

SSD Academic Engagement for Families Video Series

Looking for resources to use at home to help your child learn? SSD has a great video series for families looking to do just that. From selecting "just right" books to mastering fractions, these videos make learning fun. Visit <https://vimeo.com/channels/familyengagement> to view the entire collection. ■

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ASK QUESTIONS • MAKE COMMENTS • GIVE COMPLIMENTS

Let's Talk!™ **Get started at ssdmo.org**



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www.ssdmo.org

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 each student's success

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

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NEWS FROM SSD



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SSD Recognizes Monsanto for its Commitment to Students

The SSD Board of Education recently presented Monsanto Corporation with a Community Partners for Excellence Award to mark the 20th anniversary of the District's partnership with the company to provide students with valuable work experience.



For students with disabilities, one of the most significant transitions in life is moving from high school into the adult world. When a student has attended four years of high school and still has transition needs in order to successfully meet post-secondary goals for employment, education and independent living, he or she may be considered through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for the Vocational Skills Program (VSP). VSP services are provided at one of the community-based classrooms/work sites located across St. Louis County.

Since 1998, Monsanto has been a VSP site, providing a great place for students to learn and work.

Monsanto's partnership with SSD's VSP has grown from five students in 1998 to more than 130 individuals over the years. SSD's transition students gain valuable experience from working on site at Monsanto to identify their career interests, build employment skills, and develop the attitudes and expertise necessary for future successful employment. ■