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From left: Instructor Adam Holt, Robert Patzius, James Giesler, Tonesha Vinson and Brandon Allen

Students from South Technical High School participated in the Missouri Welding Institute's inaugural high school welding competition. Ninety students participated from both Missouri and Kansas. South Tech students earned four of the 10 prizes awarded. Robert Patzius earned the first-place \$11,900 scholarship. James Giesler took second place, earning a \$5,950 scholarship. Tonesha Vinson placed fourth and Brandon Allen placed ninth, both earning \$500 scholarships.



SPECIAL EDITION



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The Measure of Success

Awards honor students, staff, community for outstanding achievements

Ryan Plambeck knows a thing or two about perseverance.

When Ryan started as a freshman at Hazelwood West High School, he was in modified classes, participated in no extracurricular activities, rarely spoke and always chose to eat lunch in a classroom away from his peers. He got lost navigating the building and would often forget his schedule or his room numbers.

With a diagnoses of language impairment and Asperger syndrome, Ryan has challenges communicating and with social interactions. But through consistent hard work, Ryan has made tremendous strides.

Now, as a senior, Ryan is in the general education setting for all of his classes. He is an active member of Hazelwood West's Earth and Sky Club and the Art and Fibers Club, with some of his art being displayed at local art fairs. He participates in the Summer Work Experience Program and serves as an inspiration to other students.

Ryan's perseverance and indomitable spirit are what made him a recipient of this year's Rosemary Zander Award. The Rosemary Zander Award, the highest honor for students who receive services from SSD, is awarded each year in recognition of remarkable achievements.

SSD speech-language pathologist Matthew Moellering nominated Ryan for this year's award.

"Ryan has inspired me," Moellering said. "He has accomplished so much with so many obstacles stacked against him. In my 10-plus years of teaching, I have never witnessed such a drastic change."

That drastic change is the driving force behind everything at SSD, and student success stories such as Ryan's are unfolding every day throughout St. Louis County. But as the SSD logo suggests, such success is only possible through a partnership — an intricate collaboration between students, parents, staff, partner districts and the community as a whole.

To recognize those community members who share that commitment to student success, SSD established the Special Ambassador Award. Each year, Special Ambassador Awards go to individuals or to groups that demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students, staff and mission of SSD.

One of this year's winners is Hazelwood West journalism teacher Chris Holmes, who has a deep understanding of the benefits of inclusion. As a parent of a son with autism, he has a true appreciation for students with disabilities. Holmes is an enthusiastic and devoted teacher who welcomes all students with disabilities in his classroom and celebrates the unique gifts of each student. In Holmes' classroom, students have a safe haven — a place where they can be themselves and where they are accepted and appreciated. He is a champion and ambassador for students of all ability levels.

"We're all ambassadors, inspirational conduits of others and for others — whether they be our spouses, children, hobbies, careers or colleagues," Holmes said. "It's cliché to say I would not be as good — as good a husband, father, teacher or friend — if it weren't for these personal ambassadors in my life. But it is an undeniable fact."

In addition to recognizing students and community members, SSD also has established several awards to recognize outstanding staff members. The district's Building Block, Lasting Impression, Key to the Classroom and Teacher of the Year awards recognize staff members in various roles who have made a significant impact on student success. *Look inside this issue of Special Edition for a complete list of this year's winners.*

Matthew Moellering and Rosemary Zander Award recipient Ryan Plambeck



Check out www.ssdmo.org to see profiles and pictures of all of this year's Rosemary Zander Award winners.

South Tech student honored as SSD Tech Prep Student of the Year

When it comes to exceptional students, Peter Bennett is a picture-perfect example.

Peter was selected as the 2011 Tech Prep Student of the Year for SSD. At South Technical High School, Peter is a standout student in the Graphic Production and Printing program, earning a straight-A average in the program.

"The other students in the program look for Peter's leadership," said Graphic Production and Printing instructor Bruce Gard. "I use Peter as a mentor for students that have started the program late, or have missed class and need to catch up. Peter is an outstanding young man with a bright future ahead of him."

Peter is involved in SkillsUSA as well as numerous other community activities, such as serving as a volunteer photographer with the St. Louis Children's Choirs. Peter photographs Choir events and concerts. His photographs have appeared on concert advertisements, posters, postcards, slide shows and compact disc covers.

The Tech Prep Student of the Year award annually recognizes an outstanding technical high school senior who is committed to career and technical education, maintains involvement in both school and community activities and career-technical organizations, and is committed to a post-secondary career education program.



KEY TO THE CLASSROOM AWARD WINNERS

The Key to the Classroom Award honors the top teachers at SSD. The district has more than 2,700 teacher-level staff.

- **Lisa Andrade**, itinerant teacher of orthopedic impairment, SSD
- **Liz Charlton**, Wydown Middle, Clayton School District
- **Lisa Flick**, Ridge Meadows Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Lori Foley**, Wydown Middle, Clayton School District
- **Rod Gerke**, Southview, SSD
- **Carol Gibbons**, Oakville Middle, Mehlville School District
- **Ken Holzapfel**, McCluer High, Ferguson-Florissant School District
- **Cheryl Lindley**, Wild Horse Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Terri Linhoff**, Ladue Early Childhood Center, Ladue School District
- **Lisa Rieker**, Parkway Alternative Credit Experience and Missouri Option programs, Parkway School District



Special Ambassador Chris Holmes and Assistant Superintendent Lynne Midyett

SPECIAL AMBASSADOR AWARD WINNERS

The Special Ambassador Award is the highest recognition given by SSD. It is presented to members of the community who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students and/or staff of SSD.

Special Ambassador Group winners are:

- AT&T IT Operations
- Parc Provence
- Parkway School District Special Services
- Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis

Special Ambassador Individual winners are:

- **Owen Benben**, student at Highcroft Ridge Elementary, Parkway School District
- **Chris Holmes**, teacher at Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District
- **Suelaine Matthews**, Access office manager, St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley
- **Art McCoy**, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, Ferguson-Florissant School District
- **Sister Rita McGovern**, retired director of admissions, Nazareth Living Center
- **Katherine Spross**, volunteer coordinator, Feed My People



Special Ambassador Owen Benben

BUILDING BLOCK AWARD WINNERS

The Building Block Award honors the district's outstanding paraprofessionals for their significant contributions to the lives of SSD students. SSD has more than 1,700 paraprofessionals.

- **Elaine Breite**, Carmen Trails Elementary, Parkway School District
- **Matt Karolcik**, Neuwoehner, SSD
- **Kathleen Kidwell**, Kellison Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Jessica Lasher**, Central Middle, Parkway School District
- **Dan Mueller**, Ritenour High, Ritenour School District
- **Alberta Presley**, Southview, SSD
- **Toni Towers**, Affton Early Childhood Center, Affton School District
- **Meredith Wade**, Eureka Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Roxanne Wolfslau**, Neuwoehner, SSD

LASTING IMPRESSION AWARD WINNERS

SSD honors other dedicated individuals within the district through the Lasting Impression Award. Created in 2006, it is awarded to support staff who make a difference in the lives of students both within and outside the classroom.

- **Doug Austin**, systems administrator, SSD
- **Ralph Barroso**, technical support analyst, SSD
- **Patty Benner**, audiology assistant at Litzinger School, SSD
- **Shaunda Brown**, speech/language pathologist at Russell Elementary, Hazelwood School District
- **Karen Carter**, area coordinator for deaf and hard of hearing, SSD
- **Ernest Garrett III**, social worker, Ritenour School District
- **Jean Hantak**, physical therapist at Kellison Elementary, Rockwood School District
- **Wanda Harris**, bus driver, SSD
- **Mandi Jones**, secretary trainer, SSD
- **Meaghan Juergens**, area coordinator, Ferguson-Florissant School District
- **Sheri Kanterman**, area coordinator, Parkway School District
- **Suzanne Lang**, bus monitor, SSD
- **Nancy Richey**, guidance counselor at Neuwoehner, SSD
- **Kristen Rohrer**, school psychologist, Pattonville School District
- **Ros VanHecke**, director of planning and development, SSD
- **Jane Walsma**, social worker, Valley Park School District
- **Marty Woytus**, area coordinator, Parkway School District



Lasting Impression Award winner Mandi Jones

ROSEMARY ZANDER AWARD WINNERS

- **Paul Amleshi**, Lindbergh High / South Technical High, Lindbergh School District / SSD
- **Charlene Behlmann**, Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District
- **David Brown**, Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District
- **Keandre Brown**, Jennings High, Jennings School District
- **Kevin Cardinale**, Community-Based Transition Services, SSD
- **Kabri Dixon**, Maplewood-Richmond Heights High, Maplewood-Richmond Heights School District
- **Lupita Dominguez**, Neuwoehner, SSD
- **Brian Faust**, Southview, SSD
- **Sheila Glover**, Northview, SSD
- **Jackie Henderson Jr.**, Southview, SSD
- **Adrian Howe**, Lindbergh High / South Technical High, Lindbergh School District / SSD
- **Daniel Johnson**, Neuwoehner, SSD
- **Alexis Keller**, Pattonville Heights Middle, Pattonville School District
- **Alan Montes De Oca**, Ackerman, SSD
- **Melissa Myers**, Mehlville Sr. High, Mehlville School District
- **Ryan Plambeck**, Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District

- **Ryan Richardt**, Lindbergh High / South Technical High, Lindbergh School District / SSD
- **Lamar Scott**, Normandy High, Normandy School District
- **Ellen Stackle**, Lindbergh High / South Technical High, Lindbergh School District / SSD
- **Danesha Tomlin**, Instructional Services Center, Parkway School District
- **Abby Trimble**, Oakville High, Mehlville School District
- **Joe Weller**, Christian Brothers High Special Non-Public Access Program, SSD
- **Michaela White**, Rockwood Summit High / South Technical High, Rockwood School District / SSD



Rosemary Zander Award recipient Jackie Henderson Jr. (center) with his nominators Jennifer Mitchell (left) and Chris McEvoy.

SSD Teacher of the Year Offers Students Recipe for Success Beyond School

Ken Holzapfel will be the first to tell you that everything he does with the Work Experience Program at McCluer High School is for the benefit of his students. He sets high expectations for his students, and they rise to the occasion. He has dedicated his professional career to creating programs that build their skills and enhance their potential for a successful life after high school.

With more than 23 years experience with SSD, Holzapfel is always searching for new opportunities for his students to gain valuable, real-life, work experience. When he first arrived at McCluer six years ago, there was only one work site that was being accessed by about five students. Since then, Holzapfel has expanded the Work Experience Program to include three sites, which offer a variety of opportunities for all of his students.

Holzapfel even began a small catering business that the students operate. He worked to obtain grants, facility space and equipment to make the business possible. His long-term goal is that the business could be a profitable operation run by graduates of the program.

"Understanding he had a group of students for whom the traditional route to transitional programming was not appropriate, Ken actively pursued new options. He is all about the kids," said his supervisor Vicki McNamara.

He also has developed a functional life skills lab at the high school that affords students the chance for hands-on activities centered around cooking, cleaning and self-care. Students also are exposed to transition planning and career exploration in the school-based portion of the program.

Holzapfel finds his reward in seeing the progress that his students make and in the relationships he's been able to form with his students in helping them realize their full

potential. Most importantly, he sees his rewards when students continue their success after they graduate.

Holzapfel will represent SSD next year in the statewide competition for Missouri Teacher of the Year, a program sponsored by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. ■



SSD Teacher of the Year Ken Holzapfel is congratulated by Superintendent John Cary.