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SPECIAL EDITION



SSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR HELPS STUDENTS ACHIEVE SUCCESS

Tammy Topp may be known at Litzsinger School for collecting enough Campbell's soup labels to buy iPads, but her colleagues said that's just one example of how she goes above and beyond for students.

Topp, SSD's 2012 Teacher of the Year, earned the honor for her dedication to students and her innovative efforts to help them achieve success.

Inside and outside of the classroom, Topp demonstrates her commitment to her students and the Litzsinger School community in many ways. She serves on numerous school committees and frequently donates her time to prepare for Litzsinger events including graduation, Fall Harvest Night, the school picnic and holiday program. She is also active in other organizations that benefit Litzsinger students, such as the Carney's Kids Foundation and the Special Education Foundation.

As coordinator of the Labels for Education program at Litzsinger, Topp helped collect more than 800,000 Campbell's soup labels that recently helped purchase 14 new iPads for use with the school's students.

"She will never brag or tell you about all the things she does. She's kind of the silent person who makes things happen," said Janet Matthew, a speech-language pathologist at Litzsinger and one of the five people who nominated Topp for the award.

With 23 years of teaching experience, Topp focuses on her students' strengths

and is constantly looking for new ways to help them achieve success. In the words of Jenifer Majino, one of her nominators, "Tammy inspires small steps to reach large goals."

Topp said the keys to being a good teacher are flexibility, maintaining high expectations for students, persistence and maintaining a realistic outlook.

"I believe that all my students have the ability to learn. That learning may not look like the learning of his or her nondisabled peers, but my students are learning in their own creative and adaptive methods and at their own pace," she said.

Topp's positive impact on students with special needs extends into her personal life. She and her husband served as foster parents for and later adopted their daughter Catrina, a former Litzsinger student who now attends Neuwoehner High School.

Topp said she was surprised and humbled to receive the district's Teacher of the Year award and credited her SSD colleagues for their support in helping her grow as an educator.

"To be recognized for something that I am passionate about is definitely the biggest honor in my teaching career," she said.

Topp 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. ■



"To be recognized for something that I am passionate about is definitely the biggest honor in my teaching career."
— TAMMY TOPP



CONNECT WITH OTHER PARENTS

The SSD Parent Advisory Council (PAC) was developed to connect parents and school staff who share an interest in promoting the education of children with disabilities and/or unique learning needs. The PAC has regular meetings to share information and seek input from parents.

Get involved with the SSD PAC to:

- Network and communicate with other parents of children who receive special education services;
- Become as informed as possible about special education services;
- Improve communication between your local school district and SSD;
- Create a positive understanding and awareness of students with disabilities; and
- Establish a network of advocacy for local, state and national disability issues.

For more information, visit www.ssdmo.org/leadership/pac.html, call 314.989.8342, ext. 6650 or e-mail pac@ssdmo.org.

See Tammy at work in the classroom and hear from her and colleagues at www.ssdmo.org/media/Topp.mov

KIDS' COMMITMENT TO SUCCESS:

Students shine with leadership skills, perseverance and positive attitudes

IN APRIL, THE SPECIAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION AND SSD COME TOGETHER TO RECOGNIZE THE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS OF LOCAL STUDENTS THROUGH THE ANNUAL COMMITMENT TO KIDS BANQUET. This year, 24 students received Rosemary Zander Awards. Others were honored with financial scholarships for college or summer camps.

Founded in 1988, the Rosemary Zander Award program has long recognized the accomplishments of students receiving services from SSD. Students are honored for success in a range of categories — academics, arts, athletics, communications, vocational training, employment, independent living skills, community service and extracurricular activities.

Each of the 2012 Rosemary Zander Award recipients have diverse achievements and varied journeys, but they have all demonstrated SSD's central belief that all students can learn and succeed.

To hear more about each award winner's inspiring story, watch the video posted on the SSD website at: www.ssdmo.org/media/Zander_2012.mov. The article below highlights some of the qualities and skills that contributed to several award winners' successes.

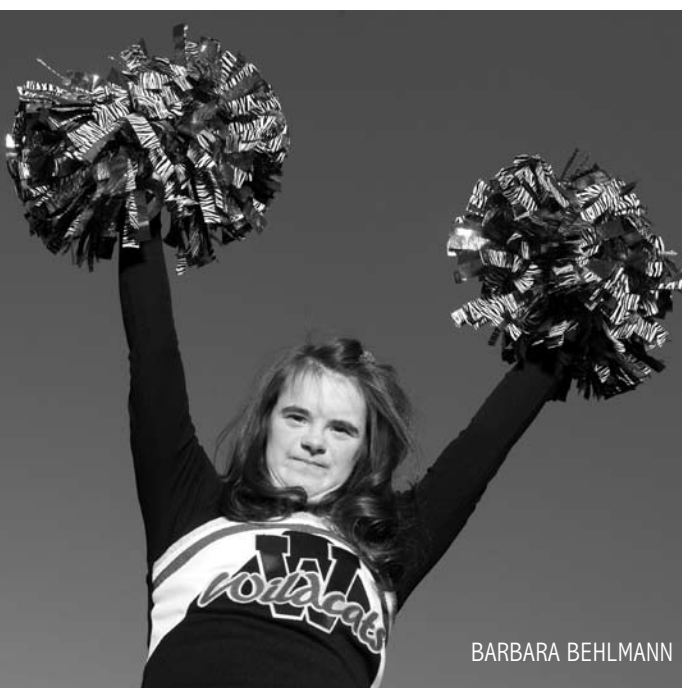
Leadership Among Peers

AT FIRST GLANCE, BARBARA BEHLMANN'S STORY APPEARS LIKE THAT OF A TYPICAL TEENAGE GIRL. The senior at Hazelwood West High School is a varsity cheerleader, was named homecoming queen and was a member of the prom court.

But Barbara's story is anything but typical. She has Down syndrome and has overcome many challenges to become the young woman she is today. Whether cheering on the Wildcats with the Peer Buddies club, helping raise funds for an accessible playground for children with disabilities, or competing in Special Olympics, Barbara has earned the respect and admiration of her peers.

"Along the way, some of the students' attitudes toward people with disabilities slowly began to change. Barbara had no idea she was helping to shape these wonderful changes; she just kept on

doing what was completely natural to her," said SSD speech/language pathologist Jodi Schutzenhofer, who nominated Barbara for the award. "She still has many pages left to her story, but as she closes this chapter, she is leaving Hazelwood West a better place than it was when she entered."



BARBARA BEHLMANN



FRANK TYLER

Perseverance

FRANK TYLER SOMETIMES WISHES HE DIDN'T HAVE TO LEARN HIS LIFE'S LESSON THE WAY HE DID, but he's glad that he is who he is today, instead of the "old Frank."

Frank, who had dropped out of school after the eighth grade, suffered a traumatic brain injury in 2009 when he and a friend were in a vehicle accident leaving a party. His friend was killed in the crash, and Frank spent significant time in a coma. He enrolled at Ritenour High School at the age of 18 using a walker, relearning how to swallow and use his voice, and requiring one-on-one support due to short-term memory loss.

But Frank did not give up and has made great strides during his time at Ritenour, gaining physical strength and independence. He volunteers at Ranken Jordan Hospital, where he spent time after his accident, because he wants to give back to the people who helped him.

"Frank has always been honest about his life choices that led to his car wreck. He feels it is his duty to tell his story to others so they will not make the same choices he did," said SSD teacher Mary Buttice, who nominated Frank for the Rosemary Zander Award. "But the part of Frank's story that cannot be told except by Frank is his amazing attitude and humor."

Positive Attitude

EVERYONE AT NORTHVIEW HIGH SCHOOL KNOWS ORLANDO YOUNG. He enters the building each day with a smile and greets everyone he sees by name.

As president of Northview's student council, Orlando helps generate new and innovative ideas that enhance the school's environment. Although he struggles with severe learning disabilities in reading, writing and math, he is determined to be highly successful in life and works tirelessly to reach his goals.

Orlando also spends part of his school day at North Technical High School, where he was instrumental in developing a partnership program in which North Tech students taught weekly lessons to students at Northview. Orlando prepared the lessons, and this year he is teaching a weekly poetry class at Northview.

His teacher, Wendy Smith, writes, "Orlando is always thinking of ways to help others and how to make improvements to create a highly motivated learning environment that promotes character. He is not afraid to vocalize his ideas and does what is best for everyone. Students and staff alike recognize Orlando as a leader and he is highly respected by all." ■



ORLANDO YOUNG

2012 Rosemary Zander Award Recipients

BARBARA BEHLMANN
Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

WILLIAM TIMOTHY BRAHAN
Bayless High
Bayless School District

TYLER BREWER
North Technical High
Special School District

JIM DELARBER
Southview High
Special School District

ALYSA DERBY SMITH
Lindbergh High
Lindbergh School District

ARYANA DREAD
Townsend Elementary
Hazelwood School District

ELIZABETH DUNSFORD-CONWAY
Brentwood High
Brentwood School District

KARYN JONES
Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

DANIELLE JUNDT
Bernard Middle
Mehlville School District

BRADY KEDGE
McCluer North High
Ferguson-Florissant
School District

BRYAN KERNS
Vocational Skills Program
Special School District

KRISTEN MCGUIRE
Vocational Skills Program
Special School District

WILLIE MCLEMORE
Neuwoehner High
Special School District

VICTORIA METZGER
South Technical High
Special School District

KEVIN MITCHELL
Oakville Middle
Mehlville School District

JOSEPH PORCELLI
Woerther Elementary
Rockwood School District

HAILEY POTTER
Afton Early Childhood
Afton School District

JASMINE RILEY
Bridges
Special School District

BURKE SMITH
Lafayette High
Rockwood School District

FRANK TYLER
Ritenour High
Ritenour School District

MARIANA VIVIANO
Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

REBECCA WITZOFKY
Bernard Middle
Mehlville School District

RA'SHAWN WRIGHT
South Technical High
Special School District

ORLANDO YOUNG
Northview High/
North Technical High
Special School District

Sammy Goldman
"Living Big" Campership

DINAZ SHROFF
Parkway Central Middle
Parkway School District

Allison M. Haake
Memorial Scholarship

DEMESHA MOSLEY
Neuwoehner High
Special School District

SSD Board of Education
Scholarships

SHEKIEAH KEMP
South Technical High
Special School District

DEMESHA MOSLEY
Neuwoehner High
Special School District

Bonhomme Lions
Scholarships

GRANT GLUESENKAMP
John F. Kennedy
Catholic High School
Special School District
(SNAP Program)

ALEXANDER PARISH
Webster Groves High
Webster Groves School District

MARY JANE ROGERS
Ladue Horton Watkins High
Ladue School District

Dianne Arbeiter Scholarships
EMILY BOERSCHIG
Parkway South High
Parkway School District

LUCAS PRILENSKI
Marquette High
Rockwood School District

JAVAN WASHINGTON
Mehlville High
Mehlville School District

Special Education
Foundation Scholarships

ALYSON ADLER
Parkway North High
Parkway School District

SOPHIE GERMAIN ANNUZIATO
Brentwood High
Brentwood School District

BENJAMIN ARRENDELL
Bayless High
Bayless School District

ASHLEY BROWN
Women Leaders Scholarship
Normandy High
Normandy School District

AUSTIN ROBERT BROWN
Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

JUAQUIN BUCKLEY
Christopher Davis Scholarship
Marquette High
Rockwood School District

CHARLES EARLY IV
William R. Cumerford
Scholarship
Kirkwood High
Kirkwood School District

LINDA GRAVES
Marquette High
Rockwood School District

THOMAS GREGORY LEWIS-HUTT
Riverview Gardens High
Riverview Gardens
School District

VICTORIA METZGER
Laura K. Sherman Laughlin
Scholarship
Parkway South High/
South Technical High
Parkway School District/
Special School District

DEMESHA MOSLEY
Neuwoehner High
Special School District

DARLENA NGO
Bayless High
Bayless School District

PATRICK RAY SCHOEMEHL
Brentwood High
Brentwood School District

CHARLES WILSON
Bayless High
Bayless School District

MICHAEL ZIMMER-PRICE
Laura K. Sherman Laughlin
Scholarship
Oakville High/
South Technical High
Mehlville School District/
Special School District