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Character and Safety go Hand-in-Hand

As you approach the front entrance of Northview High School, it's hard to miss the banner that reads "Promising Practices in Character Education 2010 National Award Winner."

"Character education is the foundation of everything we do here," said Northview Principal Stephanie Valleroy.

Northview students built upon that foundation last month when they, along with students from neighboring Ackerman School, took an anti-bullying pledge while standing together to form a giant peace symbol on the lawn outside of the two schools.

Since implementing character education, Northview has seen a reduction in school discipline issues — especially with office referrals and suspensions.

"Character education provides multiple opportunities for students to reflect on what is the right choice or action," Valleroy said. "As a result, students stop and think about how their actions affect others, which results in a safer environment."

And it is this component of character education that is a natural fit with Safe Schools Week.

Safe Schools Week, which this year is Oct. 17–21, offers schools the opportunity to stress the importance

of school safety by highlighting ways to make sure students have the safest environment possible. Each SSD school has an individual safety plan that includes specific procedures regarding visitors, student pick-up, emergency drills and other precautions.

SSD Security Coordinator Bill Miller, who is also a sergeant with the Olivette Police Department, said it's important for students to know they can always go to a staff member or police officer with safety concerns.

"If they have any problems, they should feel comfortable coming to us," he said. "If there's an officer assigned to a school, they can approach him or her. Officers should be seen as a safe person to talk to."

Miller also urges students and adults alike not to hesitate to call 911 if they see a crime or emergency happening. ■



SPECIAL EDITION



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Tech Grads Bring Home Awards, Skills

Two 2011 graduates have displayed the skills they learned at South Technical High School and turned them into award-winning creations. Robert Patzius and Brandon Allen both graduated from the welding program at South Tech this spring, and each earned impressive recognition for their works of art.

Patzius earned a bronze medal in the welding sculpture contest at the SkillsUSA National Championships held in Kansas City in June. His "Autumn Inspiration" sculpture had earned a gold medal at the Missouri SkillsUSA competition before being entered into the national contest.

The project, which took six months to complete, was judged on both the sculpture itself as well as the step-by-step process that Patzius presented to the judges to detail how he made his sculpture and what he learned from the experience.

Allen, who placed second in the Missouri SkillsUSA competition, took first place at the Cee Kay Supply welding contest for his St. Louis Cardinals-themed sculpture. "Cardinal Fever" featured a stainless steel replica of baseball's World Series trophy along with a cardinal perched on top of a bat and ball.

For winning the contest, Brandon received a Miller ArcStation 60SX weld table.

Both were students in Adam Holt's welding class at South Tech, and both currently are enrolled at Missouri Welding Institute.

"The training that the welding students receive at South Tech simulates hands-on real-world experience just like that of job sites," Holt said. "Upon graduation, most of our welding students will continue to further their education at either Tulsa Welding School or Missouri Welding Institute to obtain their master pipe welding and fitting degree. Others pursue a career immediately after graduation."

One of the unique aspects of the Career and Technical Education program at SSD is the ability for students to gain the hands-on experience they need to move toward the career they plan to enter.



Robert Patzius

"When students go out to find a job, they need more than just the hands-on vocational skills," said Rosina Palmer, an instructional facilitator at South Tech. "They need a combination of skills. No matter what field the students are training for, communication skills, like speaking and writing, are just as important when it comes to finding jobs."

With more than 30 programs in a wide range of fields, the Career and Technical Education program offers a variety of options. The program partners with more than 370 employers and schools to help students gain experience and expertise they could not receive elsewhere. And several programs offer dual-enrollment opportunities, where students can work toward professional licenses, apprenticeships, certifications and college degrees while also earning a high school degree.

But collaboration isn't just with outside partners.

"Our staff really work well together," Palmer said. "A student may learn one thing in the shop from one instructor, and then the next day they work with a guidance counselor or librarian to practice a mock interview. Everyone has their area of expertise, and the staff works so well to help the students apply things to real-world situations." ■

DEFINING MOMENTS

Vicki Nelson Named Missouri Teacher of the Year Finalist

"I am so excited about this opportunity. I'm so proud to represent my students, my colleagues and the district."

That was Vicki Nelson's reaction when she learned the news that she was chosen as one of six finalists for the Missouri Teacher of the Year.

Nelson, a teacher at Litzsinger School, was the 2010 SSD Teacher of the Year. In August, her application was submitted to the Missouri State Teacher of the Year committee. Among the dozens of applications from throughout the state, Nelson's was selected as one of six finalists.

Here is an excerpt from the state application that helped earn Vicki state recognition:

I can remember three things I wanted to be when I grew up: a ballerina, an archeologist, or a teacher. Being a teacher moved to the top of the list when I saw the movie, "The Miracle Worker." Most people remember the last scene when Anne Sullivan is pumping water from the well and finger spelling W-A-T-E-R into Helen Keller's hand. However, the scene that most impacted me was the dinner sequence when Anne and Helen are having the "spoon fight." I remember Helen walking around the dinner table using her hands to grab food from everyone's plate, and the family just allowing this to happen. Anne Sullivan was appalled. She expected Helen to sit at the table and eat with a spoon like everyone. She saw the child not the disability.

While in high school I participated in a work-study program. The "Miracle Worker" was playing in my head when I signed up to work in a school. I thought I wanted to work with students who were blind, but I was offered a



placement in a classroom for students with orthopedic impairments. One student used a headstick to push the keys on a typewriter to communicate. This was the first time I had ever been around someone who could not talk. It also was the first time I had ever witnessed a child work so hard just to be part of the class. I was forever changed by this student's determination. My career path was set. I wanted to become a teacher. I enrolled at the University of Missouri – Columbia, graduated, and was immediately offered a position at Special School District.

My first years of teaching were crazy, enjoyable, hectic, scary, rewarding, and I must admit, pretty much a blur. I felt so confident as a young teacher. However, I struggled with how to teach my students to read, write and communicate. I knew they needed an alternative to the materials I was using. I began to research the topics of augmentative communication, assistive technology, and computer-aided instruction. In fact, my greatest contributions and accomplishments during my teaching

career were the result of my quest to find these tools and supports for my students. Early in my career, curriculum available on the market was not designed for students who were non-verbal, so I made my own. Years later, I won the "Incentive for School Excellence Program" grant. This grant allowed me to purchase specialized computer software and hardware. In addition, I was able to refine and share all the literacy and language materials I had created; all of which evolved into the "Litz Read Program." Currently there are 31 "Litz Read" units uploaded to my district's server. I continue to add new units every year, and they are available to hundreds of teachers across St. Louis County.

The idea of using technology in the classroom was new when I first started teaching. I started with one computer that most of my students could not access. I took trainings and wrote grants to obtain the adaptations needed to make the computer the vital tool that it has become. The computer is their pencil. A classroom of students cannot share one

pencil and effectively learn. Currently, every child in my classroom has his or her own computer with adaptations specific to each of his or her access needs. Over the course of my 30 years in education, the technology that my students use continues to change and new technology constantly appears on the market. A few years ago, when my district began exploring the use of iPods, I was asked to develop a use for them in my classroom. I created training videos for each of my student's communication devices and transferred the videos onto each student's iPod allowing them and their parents to learn the fundamentals of the device at home. This year, I have been exploring the many uses of the iPad. My students are technology dependent. It is how they are able to demonstrate to the world that they are capable. I continue to be excited and inspired by these new tools.

Recently, I had a meeting with the school psychiatrist. He had been observing several children in my classroom over the course of the school year. After the latest observation he said to me, "I am always amazed to see the things your students are doing. It would be easy to write them off if I didn't see them doing their work on their computers." Giving the students the right tools and support not only allows them to access the curriculum, it also allows people to see and appreciate their true potential. People are able to see that they can learn and that they are capable. This is one of my greatest joys.

I am so thankful that so many years ago I did not see a movie about archeology or dancing because I hate getting dirty, and quite frankly, I would look ridiculous in a tutu. It is fitting that it was "The Miracle Worker" because it set me on the path to education. Teaching is what I was meant to do — it is who I am. ”

A Taste of the Future

South Tech Alum Secures World-Class Culinary Internship

"I didn't think that I would get it. It just seemed way out there."

Two months into his internship under renowned Chef Pierre Chambrin, this is Brody Kampshroeder's sentiment.

"I heard about the opportunity at school, applied, interviewed and before I knew it, I had the position."

Brody, who graduated in May after completing the Culinary Arts program at South Technical High School, knew that his love for cooking meant that he would continue his career in that direction.

He is now interning under Chambrin, former White House chef to the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton presidential administrations, and is guaranteed a job in either New York or California at the end of his internship.

The SSD Career and Technical Education Division partners with more than 370 employers and schools, helping students gain the experience and opportunities they'll need to succeed after graduation, like Brody's three-year internship.

"I am so very proud of Brody," said Lori Breeding, Brody's mom. "His teachers David Bass and Melissa Gray were phenomenal. He was well-prepared and supported to pursue this dream internship."

Brody works six days a week at Saint Louis Club, honing his skills in a variety of areas. He reports that he loves every aspect of the job.

"Every day is different. Usually they put me in a different station daily. I get to jump in and learn on the go," said Brody.

His instructors at South Tech say that Brody is the kind of student who easily adjusts and has an enthusiasm for learning the industry.

"Some kids you can tell right away that they are going to be in the industry. Brody was one of those kids," said Gray. "You could see his passion in the kitchen."

Brody hopes to use the skills he mastered at South Tech, as well as what he is now learning at Saint Louis Club, to one day open up his own café and record store.

"I'm excited about the future," said Brody. "Who doesn't love good food, coffee and music?"

For more information on the Special School District's career and technical education programs, visit www.ssdmo.org. ■

