



SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 5, 2013

SSD STUDENTS ATTEND MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Forum Helps Build Skills

Several students who receive services from SSD participated in the Missouri Youth Leadership Institute in July. The four-day leadership-training program is for high school students with disabilities, ages 16-21, who were selected from local communities to help them cultivate leadership, citizenship and social skills.

The Missouri Youth Leadership Institute assists students in developing leadership skills to help them reach their full potential. It also promotes inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society, and participates in policy-making that affects young people with disabilities.

Scott Sanchez, a senior at Ladue Horton Watkins High School who receives services from SSD, attended the leadership program. "I found out about the program through a wonderful organization called Missouri Families for Effective Treatment of Autism. I knew I would find the forum helpful, so I applied almost immediately," he said.

Students interested in attending were selected through a statewide competitive process that sought students with disabilities who have leadership potential. Each applicant submitted a standard application, resume and three letters of recommendation.

"I wasn't sure if I wanted to let everyone or anyone know that I have a disability," said Joshua Walker, a senior at Ritenour High School and SSD's North Technical High School. Walker receives SSD services and also attended the forum. "After the conference, I am proud of what I have accomplished and of who I am. The friends I made will be with me for a long time."

One of the goals of the program is for students with disabilities to meet other students who share similar experiences. Through the course of four days, students learned to build pride and self-esteem, and began building a supportive community.

"I met some people there that changed my outlook on how and who to trust," said Sanchez. "When I first walked in and saw all of those people that were so different, it honestly scared me a bit. I wasn't sure I'd fit in, if I could trust these people, or if I could even have a decent conversation across that chasm of 'differentness.' However, in the four days I had with them, most of them turned out to be pretty cool."

One of the keys to the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is leadership by example. As part of the program, students met successful adults with disabilities who shared similar challenges. This framework provided an atmosphere of encouragement that helped the students realize their ability to pursue meaningful employment and become contributing members of society.

"It's always better to work in numbers and being with the like-minded people helps a lot," said Walker. "Working closely with people with disabilities can really open your eyes up to what they may need, like making sure newly constructed buildings have entranceways for wheelchairs or other easy ways to enter the building."

Students at the forum also learned about building independent living skills and setting career goals as well as ways to develop advocacy skills.



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— JOSHUA WALKER, STUDENT

Walker plans to use the skills he developed in the future by volunteering his time to work with people with disabilities. "I am not sure if school is in my future, but I am definitely striving to make a difference in others' lives in a positive way," he said.

Because of his disability, Walker knows he has had to work hard for things. "It has made me appreciate my successes and my failures," he said. "I know if you put your best effort into what you are doing, you will not fail. Regardless of the outcome, you know you gave it your all. And that leaves me with no regrets."

Sanchez says he will use the skills he worked on at the forum in the future. "I want to go to college and maybe study in the area of pharmacy. I don't exactly have a plan yet, though, and this both excites and terrifies me." ■

For more information about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, visit <http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>.

Grant Offers Students Unique Learning Opportunity

Coming up with creative ways to teach students is a challenge that SSD staff members embrace. Jason Hertlein, an SSD teacher at Selvidge Middle School in the Rockwood School District, found a great way to get his students enthused about a year-end project.

As their final for the year, the students built toy trains. "Although it wasn't a traditional final, the project still required the students to demonstrate many skills such as measuring, following directions, and communicating with a team," said Hertlein. "Above all, the project required dedication and hard work."

Hertlein received a grant from the Special Education Foundation (SEF) to make the project possible. Since 1992, SEF has awarded mini grants to teachers for classroom programs that are innovative and can be duplicated in other classrooms.

For the train project, Hertlein said the students made all of the pieces, including

the wheels. "We even found the 'logs' on our nature trail," said Hertlein. "As the school year came to an end, I encouraged my students and parents to use the trains to practice a few academic skills over the summer."

Students were able to use their math skills by counting the total number of pieces in each train car and then adding them together to find the total number of pieces in the whole train. "Then I had them multiply this by eight to determine how many pieces had to be made for the whole class," said Hertlein.

They used language arts skills by talking about the process to build a train. "We had to measure, cut, drill, sand, assemble and glue," said Hertlein. "Communication is huge in a project like this."

Students also enhanced their history knowledge. The projects were created using an assembly-line approach. Each student was responsible for making a certain piece.

"Generally attributed to Henry Ford, this concept was a huge turning point in American history," said Hertlein. "Further, we used non-electric tools from the early 1900s. We certainly got a glimpse into what life was like without electricity."

And finally, students used their science skills on the project. "These trains are made from pine and poplar wood," said Hertlein. "However, this project didn't start with wood. It started with a seed that grew into a tree. Natural resources are valuable resources and that's why we conserve and recycle."

Hertlein is grateful to the SEF for providing the grant. "A project like this could not be possible without such generosity. And I want to thank my students for their fine work. I am proud to be their teacher, and I look forward to making more progress in this school year." ■

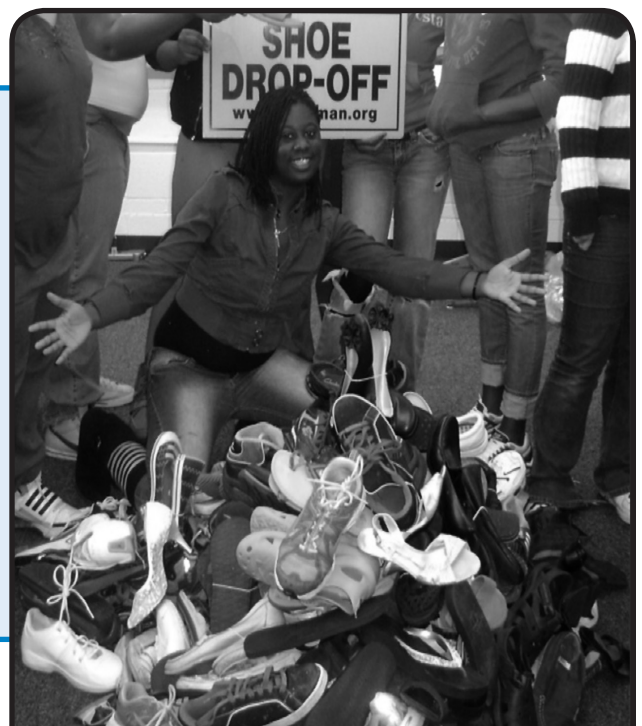


VISIT www.sef-stl.org FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SPECIAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION.

SSD SCHOOLS HONORED FOR Promising Practices in Character Education

Students and staff at SSD's Northview and Neuwoehner high schools recently earned 2013 Promising Practices awards from the Character Education Partnership (CEP). Neuwoehner teacher Lori Breeding received honors for her "Tales of Character" puppet show and Northview staff and students were recognized for implementing schoolwide service learning projects, including collecting shoes for the Shoeman Water Project. ■

READ MORE ONLINE:
<http://bit.ly/characteraward>



Honor SSD Staff or Community Members for Making a Difference in Your Child's Education

SSD has developed a wide range of award programs to recognize staff and community members for their work to benefit students. Recipients are honored annually at the SSD Salutes Banquet.

Visit <http://bit.ly/ssdawards> to download nomination forms. For more information, contact Wes Buchek at wbuchek@ssdmo.org or 314.989.8102.

Building Block Award

The SSD Building Block Award honors outstanding paraprofessionals from around the district. Nominees for the Building Block Award are judged on their skills and on their dedication to students.

Key to the Classroom Award

With more than 2,500 teachers, SSD boasts a remarkable wealth of excellent educators. The Key to the Classroom/Teacher of the Year Award recognizes the achievements of these dedicated individuals. One Key to the Classroom recipient will be selected as the district's Teacher of the Year. Nominees for the award must be classroom teachers who are employed during the current school year.

Lasting Impression Award

The Lasting Impression Award recognizes the achievements of dedicated individuals, working both in and outside of the classroom, who stand out in their role at SSD. The Lasting Impression Award is open to all SSD staff except teachers or paraprofessionals.

Special Ambassador Award

The Special Ambassador Award is the highest recognition given by SSD. The award is presented to individuals or groups who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students and/or staff of SSD. ■

Nomination Deadline is Dec. 6



Disability History & Awareness Month

October is Disability History and Awareness Month in Missouri. Here's a list of resources to learn more about how to raise awareness in your community.

Materials available through SSD's Family & Community Resource Center:
<http://bit.ly/ssdfcrc>

Toolkit from State of Missouri:
<http://bit.ly/motoolkit>

Board of Education

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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

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Nov. 7, 6:30-8 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Rooms 60-61

Aaron Likens is the Community Education Specialist for TouchPoint Autism Services and the author of "Finding Kansas: Living and Decoding Asperger's Syndrome." Aaron's passion is raising awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders and helping the world understand how the mind of a person on the spectrum works. Participate in person or from home through WebEx. Be sure to register for the online workshop for the WebEx option. You will receive a link to the presentations.

HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS & SOCIAL SKILLS

Nov. 11, 6:30-9 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Room 61

Workshop will offer strategies for parents to help children develop friendships, school

strategies for building friendships through programs such as Circle of Friends and peer support groups, and strategies that help children with language and learning differences, including autism, develop social skills.

TRANSITION PLANNING & THE IEP: THROUGH THE DOORWAY TO ADULT LIFE

Two separate sessions: Nov. 12,
6:30-8:30 p.m. or Nov. 19, 9-11 a.m.

SSD Central Office, Room 61

Focus is on the steps parents and students need to consider as they plan for the last years of school and the transition to adult life: personal futures planning; IEPs with transitional goals and action plans; resources for planning for post-secondary education, supported employment and living; working with the adult service system; and funding through Regional Office, Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security.

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