



# SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 6, 2013

## A NEW WAY TO DO NEWS: *Student Paper Teaches Skills, Inclusivity*

The newspaper classroom at SSD's Neuwoehner High School resembles that of most any other newsroom: Computers, cameras, deadline dates scribbled on a whiteboard, layout sketches for upcoming issues and people openly tossing questions and ideas around the room.

But despite the similarities, it only takes a short time to realize this isn't the workroom for New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, but a student-run newspaper.

"Some of us can't do much work on the weekends," co-editor student Jami Murphy said when discussing deadlines for the next issue of the NeuNews. "I have a lot of babysitting to do. I have a job in addition to everything else."

"It's tough setting up interviews while also having a tight academic schedule," said student reporter Shea Marks.

Along with juggling the duties of being a teenager, the small but dedicated staff is learning how to manage everything that goes into producing a monthly newspaper.

"This class is never long enough," co-sponsor teacher Stephanie Dillon said. "Sometimes there just aren't enough minutes in the hour. But it teaches them about planning, which is something many students often struggle with."

The pre-story preparation that goes into each article of the NeuNews may actually trump that of the Times or the Journal.

"In anything that we do there's extra planning that has to go into it," said co-sponsor Elizabeth Hutchcraft. "If our reporter is going to conduct an interview with students (who are non-verbal) that have communications devices, they know that their questions have to be submitted ahead of time so that they can be entered into their device."

Along with interviewing students who may have unique challenges, all surveys conducted by the NeuNews staff are made accessible to each and every student in the school. For the November survey, students voted for their favorite class in school by placing a chip into a bag marked with each subject offered.

"Not all students can vote in the same way," said Jami. "We want to make sure we can get everybody's vote for the survey."

With processes in place to serve their audience, it's hard to believe that the NeuNews is just a few months old. The first issue went to students and staff in September, and it is already making an impact.

"The response has been incredibly positive," Dillon said. "I've had staff stop me and say how professional it looks. Everyone seems to enjoy reading it."

The newspaper class was the idea of Hutchcraft, who suggested Dillon teach the course. In the spring of 2013, Dillon proposed the class to Neuwoehner administrators and developed an official course proposal that included student participation in the paper's reporting, writing, editing, photography and layout.

"Everybody shares in the work," Dillon said. "Everyone writes, everyone takes photos, and students are always a part of the editing."

The broad range of skills the students learn and practice in their newspaper class has also translated into improvements in other areas.

"Students are taking what they learn in this class to other classes and applying it there," Dillon said. "We want it to be something they're interested in — something they love to do. It's very exciting to watch on a daily basis." ■



Scan to hear Dillon and Hutchcraft talk about how NeuNews benefits students



## Read the NeuNews

September issue: <http://bit.ly/NeuNewsSept>

October issue: <http://bit.ly/NeuNewsOct>

# Miss Amazing:

## Student Wins Miss Junior Teen at Pageant



**Mackenzie Baniak** is a shining example of what the Miss Amazing Pageant aims to help participants achieve.

Mackenzie, a freshman who receives SSD services at Pattonville High School, earned the Miss Junior Teen crown earlier this year at the Missouri Miss Amazing Pageant.

The Missouri pageant features contestants in a variety of age categories from throughout the state. The event celebrates girls with physical and other disabilities.

“The Miss Amazing Pageant brings the girls out of their comfort zone and lets them see how beautiful and amazing they truly are,” said Ellie Lorenzen, state director for the Missouri pageant. “It gives them new goals to achieve and teaches them important life skills like public speaking and how to interview.”

Jackie Baniak, Mackenzie’s mother, said that her daughter really enjoyed the whole process. “It made her feel very special,” Baniak said. “And it brought the community together by involving family, friends and school.”

As the winner of the Missouri competition, Mackenzie has been busy with official duties such as bringing food to the poor, making appearances and participating in a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

She also competed in the national competition in August. These experiences have given Mackenzie the opportunity to build confidence and learn life skills.

Mackenzie said that although it was a little scary, she really enjoyed getting to dance in front of the audience for the talent showcase. “And I liked meeting new friends from all of the different states at the national competition.”

Mackenzie’s SSD teacher, Tina Rellergert, has noticed a dramatic positive difference in Mackenzie’s personality since her participation in the pageant.

“At the beginning of the year, she was uncomfortable. However, now Mackenzie has friends, enjoys school and looks forward to being here. She has a very positive and loving attitude,” said Rellergert. “Mackenzie makes an amazing Miss Junior Teen because she does not see things as obstacles to hold her back, but as challenges to push her forward.” ■

“Mackenzie makes an amazing Miss Junior Teen because she does not see things as obstacles to hold her back, but as challenges to push her forward.” –TINA RELLERGERT, SSD TEACHER

For more information on the Miss Amazing Pageant, visit [www.missamazingmissouri.com](http://www.missamazingmissouri.com).

# Student Scholarships Available

SSD and other organizations, including the Special Education Foundation (SEF) and the Bonhomme Lions, provide multiple opportunities for graduating seniors to earn scholarships for their post-secondary education. Any senior receiving SSD services or attending an SSD technical high school is eligible to apply for these scholarships.

Each reward is unique, and has its own history and specific requirements. Scholarships will be awarded at the Commitment to Kids Awards Banquet on April 24, 2014.

Visit <http://bit.ly/scholarshipforms> for application details and forms. For more information, contact Wes Buchek at 314.989.8102 or [wbuchek@ssdmo.org](mailto:wbuchek@ssdmo.org).

## SSD Board of Education Scholarship

Established in 2008, the SSD Board of Education Scholarship honors graduating SSD students who show strong leadership skills as well as a dedication to volunteerism and community involvement.

*Deadline is Feb. 14, 2014.*

## Bonhomme Lions Scholarships

The Bonhomme Lions, longtime supporters of education in the St. Louis area, have been providing scholarships to graduating SSD students for many years.

*Deadline is Feb. 14, 2014.*

## Allison M. Haake Memorial Scholarship

Established in 2008, this scholarship was created to honor an aspiring teacher who lost her battle with cancer in 2007. The scholarship is awarded to a deserving SSD student who has an interest in working with children.

*Deadline is Feb. 14, 2014.*

## Special Education Foundation Scholarships

The Special Education Foundation (SEF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of students with disabilities within the St. Louis area. Each year, SEF awards scholarships to college-bound SSD students. Winners for the award are selected based on multiple criteria.

*Deadline is Feb. 21, 2014.*

## Dianne Arbeiter Scholarships

Given in memory of Dianne Arbeiter, a 25-year SSD employee, these scholarships are awarded to students who are served by SSD's deaf/hard of hearing program.

*Deadline is Feb. 7, 2014.*

## spotlight on STUDENT SUCCESS



Students from SSD's South Technical High School recently attended the SkillsUSA Missouri State Leadership Conference in Jefferson City, Mo. They learned how to lead an effective SkillsUSA chapter and met other members from throughout Missouri. Visit <http://bit.ly/ssdskillsusa> to read the details. ■

**FOR MORE STORIES LIKE THESE, VISIT SSD ON FACEBOOK AT [FACEBOOK.COM/SSDSTLCO](https://www.facebook.com/SSDSTLCO)**

## Board of Education

- **Dr. Jim Westbury**, Board President  
jwestbury@ssdmo.org
- **Dr. Dan Cuneo**, Board Vice President  
dcuneo@ssdmo.org
- **Dr. Zella Williams**, Board Secretary  
zwilliams@ssdmo.org
- **Ms. Jan Goodman**, Director  
jagoodman@ssdmo.org
- **Mr. John F. Koeper**, Director  
jkoeper@ssdmo.org
- **Ms. Peg Lestina**, Director  
plestina@ssdmo.org
- **Ms. Marilyn Stewart**, Director  
mstewart@ssdmo.org
- **Mr. John C. Cary**, Superintendent  
jcary@ssdmo.org



LIKE US ON  
**FACEBOOK**

[www.ssdmo.org](http://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 every student's success

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

**Special School District Notice of NonDiscrimination and Accommodation:** Special School District does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, veteran status, age, or activity protected by federal or state law in its programs, activities and employment. Direct inquires and complaints under this policy to Special School District's Compliance Coordinator, 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63131; telephone 314.989.8100 or to the Office of Civil Rights, 8930 Ward Parkway, Suite 2037, Kansas City, Mo. 64114-3302; telephone 816.268.0550. Information about the existence and location of services, activities, and facilities accessible to impaired persons can be obtained from Special School District's Compliance Coordinator at the phone number and address listed above.

*Special Edition* is a publication of the Communications Department of Special School District of St. Louis County.  
314.989.8288 / [communications@ssdmo.org](mailto:communications@ssdmo.org)



Contains 50% pre-consumer  
and 10% post-consumer content.

## NEWS FROM SSD



**Special School District  
of St. Louis County**  
12110 Clayton Road  
Town & Country, MO 63131

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

ST. LOUIS, MO  
PERMIT NO. 1282

# COMING UP @ SSD

## THE ART OF EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

Jan. 13, 6-9 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Room 61

Learn the importance of keeping and organizing records, what information needs to be in your child's file, how to communicate more effectively with your child's school district and the importance of working collaboratively to solve problems.

## STUDENT-LED IEP MEETINGS

Jan. 27, 6-9 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Room 61

Engaging students to participate in their IEP meetings has been shown to develop students' skills in self-advocacy and self-determination. This training will provide students with a better understanding of what an IEP is and why it is important as well as how to participate in and present information at their own IEP meetings.

## COLLEGE PREPARATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Jan. 28, 6:30-9 p.m.

SSD Central Office, Room 60

For parents, students, high school counselors and SSD teachers. Workshop addresses college and other post-secondary options primarily for students with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder or other mild disabilities. Information will be presented about the planning and research process, services available, ACT/SAT testing accommodations and more.

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