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

## NEWS FROM SSD



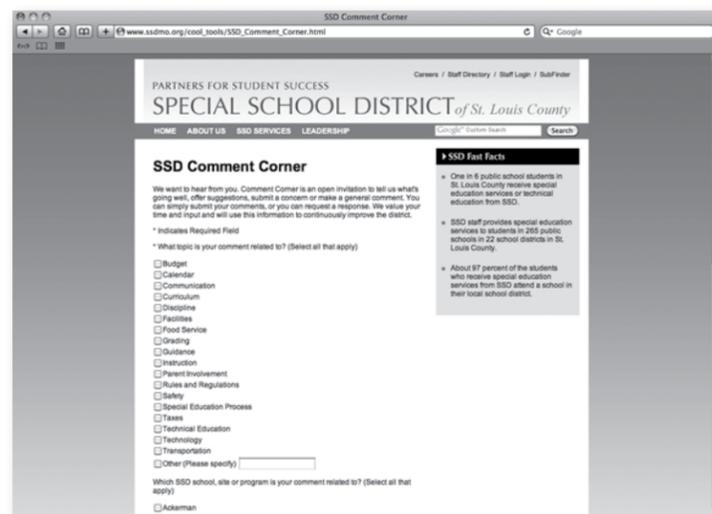
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# SAVE YOUR THOUGHTS, SHARE THEM

**SSD is focused on continuous improvement.** You can help the district by visiting the SSD Comment Corner at [www.ssdmo.org/cool\\_tools/SSD\\_Comment\\_Corner.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/SSD_Comment_Corner.html) to tell us what's going well, offer suggestions, submit a concern or make a general comment about the district. You can

simply submit your comments, or you can request a response. We value your input and want to serve you better. ■



## NEWS FROM SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY



# SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 4, 2012

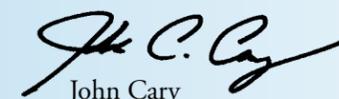
## SAVE THIS ISSUE

**At the beginning of each new school year** I find myself anticipating the many things that will happen throughout the year. We will highlight student accomplishments through programs like the Rosemary Zander Award and a variety of scholarship opportunities will be available. Parents will be able to participate in workshops and various mentoring programs, gaining valuable knowledge to support their kids. Staff will receive recognition for their extraordinary efforts through various awards like the Key to the Classroom, Building Block and Lasting Impression awards. There's so much to celebrate during a single school year.



I hope this issue of Special Edition, which includes important deadlines, resources and opportunities for families, will serve as a yearlong reference to help you plan for the school year and get you thinking about the many great things to come this year. Also included is a personal story written by a student that chronicles one very special accomplishment that he celebrated.

Looking forward to another year of serving students and families.

  
John Cary  
Superintendent of Schools

## SAVE TIME

**Need to get in touch with SSD staff?** Quickly access staff by first name, last name, title or location in the searchable staff directory located at the top of the SSD website at [www.ssdmo.org](http://www.ssdmo.org). Find phone numbers and e-mail addresses for staff at all levels within the organization. Or if you want to get a list of contacts at a particular school or partner district, visit [www.ssdmo.org/ssd\\_services/schools.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/ssd_services/schools.html) and click on the school or district to access contacts for each school and partner district. Lastly, contact information for district leadership groups like administration, Board of Education, Parent Advisory Council and Governing Council can be found under the "Leadership" tab at [www.ssdmo.org](http://www.ssdmo.org). ■

## SAVE THE DATE CALENDAR FOR SSD SCHOOLS\*

### AUGUST 13

First Day of School

### SEPTEMBER 3

School closed in observance of Labor Day

### OCTOBER 19

Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance

### NOVEMBER 21

Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance

### NOVEMBER 22-23

School closed in observance of Thanksgiving

### DECEMBER 21

Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance

### DECEMBER 24 – JANUARY 4

School closed for Winter Break

### JANUARY 7

Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance

### JANUARY 21

School closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

### FEBRUARY 18

School closed in observance of Presidents Day

### MARCH 15

Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance

### MARCH 18-22

Spring Break

### APRIL 26

Teacher and staff workshops, no student attendance

### MAY 23

Last Day of School

### JUNE 10

Summer school begins

\* Partner school districts follow the school calendar of the partner district. Visit [www.ssdmo.org/ssd\\_services/schools.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/ssd_services/schools.html) for links to partner district websites.

Community-based transition sites follow the SSD school calendar above.

# Saved the Memory



Cabria Turner and Michael Johnson.

**Michael Johnson is a senior at University City High School**, where he boasts a 4.0 GPA while taking honors classes. Michael is nonverbal and has autism. Following is what Michael wrote after attending his first prom.

## The Great Thing about PROMises

Prom is supposed to be one of the highlights of the high school experience, so naturally I thought it would be something else I would miss out on. Social interactions don't come easily to me, which made Prom seem like an unattainable fantasy. But Dr. Stephanie Berry, area coordinator for University City High School, had made it her mission to get me to Prom, so she made her pronouncement at my IEP.

That core of belief in me set the stage for what would eventually happen. She had been working behind the scenes screening a couple of my classmates as potential dates. There was no argument from me. I felt I would be honored to go with either of them.

I had been to a few dances geared toward special-needs students but heretofore lacked the courage to attend a regular school dance. The time had come. The typical students I had grown up with would soon depart, diplomas in hand.

I wanted to prove I could overcome the social challenges and noise of Prom. This experience for someone with severe autism is akin to the ascent of Everest.

The buildup to Prom night seemed interminable. Which of the prospective dates could go? Who would help me at the Prom? I found solace and support from my teacher Mrs. Kavourinos and Rachael, my aide. Both would be attending Prom and Rachael would be my trusty helper. My older sister was in town the week before Prom to give me some dance lessons. The steps didn't matter. She gave me the courage to just get out there and move. It took a village to get me to Prom.

The big evening arrived with delays from a hailstorm and a forgotten ID. My tuxedo was hot and confining. My date looked spectacular, adding to my anxiety. I didn't want to let her down. The tension climbed with the elevator carrying us up to Windows on Washington. The tension eased as I took in the scene and encountered familiar faces. And yes, I did it. I sat at a different table than planned, ate with a modicum of grace, posed for pictures, and danced. I lacked in style and fancy moves but still felt like part of the crowd.

My parents worried I might last only thirty minutes. The noise and new situation were challenging but I stayed for three hours. I remain a non-verbal autistic student but I treasure this evening of inclusion. ■

# SAVE THE SITE: [www.ssdmo.org](http://www.ssdmo.org)

The SSD website offers a variety of resources, including detailed descriptions of the entire special education process. The process has been broken down into three steps, so visitors can easily find the information they need.

## Step 1: Getting started at SSD

Learn about the evaluation process and special education services at SSD. Visit [www.ssdmo.org/step1.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/step1.html).

## Step 2: Making the most of the IEP Process

Get questions answered about the IEP process, including timelines, IEP meetings and placement options. Visit [www.ssdmo.org/step2.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/step2.html).

## Step 3: Planning for adult life

For more information about planning for adult life, including employment, continued education, recreation, independent living, financial resources and more, visit [www.ssdmo.org/step3.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/step3.html). ■



## SAVE YOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE EXPERTS

SSD offers families a variety of opportunities to learn more about special education and disabilities through district resources like the Family & Community Resource Center (FCRC). The FCRC provides just what its name promises: A vast array of special education and disability-related tools and resources for SSD families and the community at large. The FCRC's collection includes thousands of books, journals, videos, resource packets and more. View the online library of materials at <http://alexandria.ssdmo.org/7059323#>. Materials may be sent home through school mail to families whose children receive SSD services or visit the center to check out materials.

The FCRC also offers a parent leadership institute that provides training, resources and skill building specific to the needs of parents of children with disabilities. For more information about this free program, visit [www.ssdmo.org/cool\\_tools/fcfc.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/fcfc.html).

Additionally, a variety of workshops are offered on topics ranging from basic sign language and teaching kids social skills to college preparation and understanding the IEP process. For a complete listing of workshops, visit [www.ssdmo.org/cool\\_tools/workshops.html](http://www.ssdmo.org/cool_tools/workshops.html). ■



Rosemary Zander Award recipient Hailey Potter

## SAVE MONEY

SSD, the Special Education Foundation, the Bonhomme Lions and a variety of other organizations offer scholarships to SSD students. Mark your calendar to turn in scholarship applications by Feb. 15, 2013. Applications can be found on the SSD website beginning in December at [www.ssdmo.org](http://www.ssdmo.org). ■



Scholarship recipient Victoria Metzger