



SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 3, 2014

More Than Words on a Page

One of the magical things about a good book is how the story can come alive to the reader. A well-written book often captures its readers with a fascinating plot. Or a character may seem so real, it feels like you know him or her personally. In some cases, the book's setting may seem so authentic, you find yourself lost in a whole new world. But for students that are non-readers, it can be a challenge to get them to experience such joys that come with books.

However, for Diane Witte's students at SSD's Northview High School, reading is more than just the words on the page. Many of her students are non-readers, and many can't physically turn the pages of a book. But there is at least one book her students know from cover to cover, thanks to the interactive version Witte produced for her students.

The book is "Marshall the Miracle Dog." It is a true story about a dog that was abused, rescued and eventually found a forever home with the book's author, Cyndi Willenbrock. After Willenbrock shared the book and brought Marshall to visit with students at Northview, principal Stephanie Valleroy suggested to Witte the idea of making it an interactive book.

With Willenbrock's permission, Witte turned "Marshall the Miracle Dog" into an interactive version that all students could use and enjoy through the use of symbols, special pictures, sounds and other features that aren't found in standard books.

"The pictures represent concepts," said speech-language pathologist Laura Kersting. "To help those that can't read or have deficits, this is a way to read the book without reading the words."

"The results were so amazing," Witte said. "Students could activate the book via the Smart Board. They could answer comprehension questions, state facts, understand the emotions that were happening in the book, demonstrate knowledge of bullying and write a book report. These are huge accomplishments for our students."



Northview High School student Shakeal pets Marshall during a visit to the school.

Witte used Boardmaker Plus, a software program that helps develop picture boards and adds other sounds and animation.

When asked about the book, students who benefited from the interactive version are quick to tell you what lessons they learned from it:

- "Never give up, even when things are hard." —*Ariana*
- "Marshall was brave. And don't be mean." —*Josh*
- "Marshall got a new house and family. And that made him happy. Also, treat new dogs nice." —*Wayne*
- "I liked the book—the words, the pictures—I like it all." —*Christian*
- "The bully dogs tried to bite Marshall." —*Steven*
- "(Marshall) got attacked. He was worried and nervous and sad and scared." —*Shakeal*

Witte reported that the independence students have with the interactive version is highly important. With it, the students can empathize and experience the feelings and emotions that Marshall goes through in the book. Without the added features of the interactive version, the students would not be able to fully relate.

"As a sign-language interpreter for students who are deaf, I know they require visual aids and visual cues," said interpreter Laura Shields. "They are visual learners. What Ms. Witte has done with this book is how students need to be taught. It makes my job sensible. We can make sense of the language this way."

Willenbrock, who has visited more than 250 schools with Marshall, said she was overwhelmed by the positive response of the students to the interactive version of her book.

"My heart swelled with gratitude and appreciation for Diane's hard work," Willenbrock said. "Students were connecting and retaining the messages. Thanks to Diane and her gift and talent, Marshall finally can make his connection and touch every heart." ■

STUDENTS HONORED FOR ACHIEVEMENTS

On April 24, the Special Education Foundation and SSD joined together to recognize the outstanding achievements of local students at the annual Commitment to Kids Banquet. This year, 19 students received the Rosemary Zander Award. Others were also honored with financial scholarships for college and summer camps.

The Rosemary Zander Award has long recognized the accomplishments of students receiving services from SSD. Since 1988, students have been honored for success in a variety of categories — academics, arts, athletics, communications, vocational training, employment, independent living skills, community service and extracurricular activities.

Each of the 2014 award recipients has diverse achievements and has had varied challenges to meet and overcome. And they all have demonstrated SSD's central mission — that all students can learn, succeed and make a successful contribution to our community.

Read about three of this year's Rosemary Zander Award recipients below. To learn more about each award winner's inspiring story, visit <http://bit.ly/zander2014> to read their individual profiles and watch a video featuring the honorees.

Overcoming Fear Leads to Fulfillment

Jill Kiernan has an infectious smile and she has increased her confidence by taking on new challenges in life. Jill is a senior who receives services from SSD at Hazelwood West High School.

As Jill experienced new challenges when she transitioned to high school, she would sometimes meet them with resistance. While she was doing well in her freshman classes, her physical education (PE) teacher came to Jill's social worker with some concerns. "She told me Jill was reluctant to attempt to participate in daily group activities," said SSD teacher Jodi Schutzenhofer, who nominated Jill for the Rosemary Zander Award.

"I spoke with Jill about her concerns," said Schutzenhofer. "I asked her if she would like a buddy for class time and she said yes. The next time she had PE, Jill left the class with a smile on her face."

The same types of new experiences would bring Jill some anxiety, but she always

overcame her fears. She joined the Peer Buddies club, where students with disabilities attend extracurricular activities with their general education peers.

After some hesitation, Jill decided to give it a try. "Jill went and then couldn't wait to do it again," said Schutzenhofer. "The Peer Buddies were smiling because Jill's attitude was so infectious and Jill left the building with a smile on her face."

Student's Tenacity Encourages Students and Staff

Cornelius Robinson has harnessed his love of reading to fuel his growth in reading and writing skills.

Cornelius, a fourth-grader who receives services from SSD at McKelvey Elementary in the Parkway School District, continues to build his reading skills to match his high levels of comprehension.

"He truly gives 100 percent effort, even when he is frustrated to tears," said his SSD teacher and Rosemary Zander Award nominator, Lindsay Forshee.

"His determination with reading has inspired his teachers to find new strategies and methods to help him learn," said Forshee. "He also inspires his peers to try their best by encouraging them to push themselves."

Cornelius also has become a school leader in many ways. He serves on the principal's advisory group, helped set up the gym to honor veterans on Veteran's Day, was a leader for Junior Achievement Day and greets and escorts guests to classrooms throughout the building.

"Cornelius is such a positive force and a determined soul," said Forshee. "He encourages everyone around him to push to be their very best."

Independence Grows With Vocational Skills Program

Brittany Sudin experienced a transformation when she began work in the food service program at SSD's Vocational Skills Program (VSP) site at Monsanto.

"Brittany came to our program a very shy and timid young lady," said VSP teacher Lisa Sinak, who nominated Brittany for the Rosemary Zander Award.

Brittany is now in her third year with the VSP site at Monsanto. She has been working in the deli, filling and rotating the food items in the deli dishes and setting up more than 40 items.

Brittany and her sister also experienced a significant life change during her second year at Monsanto. "She and her sister moved into a supported living situation," said Sinak. "She

didn't miss a beat and she has only continued to improve and maintain her job skills and attitudes."

Sinak said Brittany has a bright future. "She always works hard and she gives 110 percent five days a week. She is a role model to her classmates as well as her two older sisters." ■



JILL KIERNAN



CORNELIUS ROBINSON



BRITTANY SUDIN

2014 ROSEMARY ZANDER AWARD RECIPIENTS

Matthew Brecklin

Green Park - VSP
Special School District

Logan Foraker

Valley Park High
Valley Park School District

Alexis Henderson

Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

Jill Ellen Kiernan

Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

Amari Yvonne Kirk

Ackerman School
Special School District

Deric J. Liddell

Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

Lens McKeown III

Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

Michael Moore

Green Park - VSP
Special School District

Casey Muhs

Parkway Central High/
South Technical High
Parkway School District/
Special School District

Abigail Elaine Neiner

Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

Donald Phillips

Hazelwood West High
Hazelwood School District

Cornelius Robinson

McKelvey Elementary
Parkway School District

Mayte Santos

Pattonville High
Pattonville School District

Cameron Scott

North Technical High
Special School District

Casey Scott

Webster Groves High
Webster Groves School
District

Brittany Sudin

Monsanto - VSP
Special School District

Neil Sulze

Green Park - VSP
Special School District

Stacie Waller

Parc Provence - VSP
Special School District

Asha Wisniewski

Northview High
Special School District

2014 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

SAMMY GOLDMAN

**"LIVING BIG"
CAMPERSHIP**

Anastasia Noblett

Gotsch Elementary
Affton School District

ALLISON M. HAAKE

**MEMORIAL
SCHOLARSHIP**

Mallory Evans

Ladue High
Ladue School District

SSD BOARD

**OF EDUCATION
SCHOLARSHIPS**

**Ranita Nichelle Ebone'
Shelton**

Hazelwood Central High
Hazelwood School District

Jessica Kuhlmann

Oakville High /
South Technical High
Mehlville School District/
Special School District

**BONHOMME LIONS
SCHOLARSHIPS**

Alexandra Pearl

Eureka High
Rockwood School District

Matthew McKenzie

Eureka High
Rockwood School District

Kurt Joseph Mueller

Lindbergh High
Lindbergh School District

Jessica Kuhlmann

Oakville High /
South Technical High
Mehlville School District/
Special School District

DIANNE ARBEITER

SCHOLARSHIP

Alexandra Pearl

Eureka High
Rockwood School District

SPECIAL EDUCATION

FOUNDATION

SCHOLARSHIPS

Kyle Anthony-Petter

Kirkwood High
Kirkwood School District

Jerri Burnett

Riverview Gardens High
Riverview Gardens School
District

Nicholas Ceriotti

Parkway Central High
Parkway School District

Andrew Hodapp

Clayton High
Clayton School District

Matthew McKenzie

*Christopher Davis
Scholarship*
Eureka High
Rockwood School District

Taylor Nguyen

Parkway West High
Parkway School District

Augustin "Tino" Pacheco

*Laura K. Sherman
Laughlin Scholarship*
Brentwood High
Brentwood School District

Shelby Whitaker

Valley Park High
Valley Park School District

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zwilliams@ssdmo.org
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jcary@ssdmo.org



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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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LITZINGER TEACHER *Honored by Symphony*

Congratulations to Paula Berner, music teacher at Litzsinger School, on being named the St. Louis Symphony's 2014 Educator of the Year.

By leading Litzsinger's annual holiday musical, classroom activities and collaborative initiatives, Paula helps SSD achieve its vision of being a partner for every student's success.



St. Louis Symphony Music Director

David Robertson presented Berner with her award on stage at Powell Hall just prior to the symphony's May 10 performance. She was also interviewed that evening during the symphony's broadcast on St. Louis Public Radio. ■