



SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 6, 2014

Taking the Next Step in Character Education

It has been said that character is doing what is right when nobody is looking. For students and staff at SSD's Neuwoehner High School, that statement rings true. But recently, people have taken notice.

In May, Neuwoehner earned the prestigious honor of being named a National School of Character. As one of just 41 schools nationwide earning the title this year, Neuwoehner took part in a rigorous evaluation process to show that character development has been infused into the curriculum and has had a positive impact on academics, student behavior and school climate.

"We started writing the application a year before we completed it," said Neuwoehner counselor Nancy Richey. "So overall, it was a two-year writing and artifact-compiling process. There were many long nights and weekends working in small rooms and eating lots of junk food."

Character education supports the social, emotional and ethical development of students. It is a proactive effort to help students develop important core ethical (recognizing what's right) and performance (doing what's right) values such as caring, honesty, responsibility, critical thinking and respect for self and others.

Neuwoehner principal Lorie Arnsman Schwartz said character education has helped fuel more student leadership at her school. As evidence, Monica, a junior, has impressed staff with her tremendous growth in becoming a leader among students.

"Freshman year, I didn't care about anything," Monica said. "And now I've changed. I'm more mature now with classes, helping others with school work, eating lunch with friends, and on the bus." She also helped organize and participate in a school-wide Veterans Day assembly to honor those that served in the military.

When she was younger, Monica dealt with being bullied. "But now I don't get bullied. I can sit with friends at lunch and there isn't any name calling." Staff agree this is a direct result of the character education the school has promoted.

"Character education has dramatically affected the students," Richey said. "We have one student, Louis, that because of character education and the programs that were implemented, went from a shy, reserved student into a true leader in the building working with other students and our new custodian — teaching him the Neuwoehner way."

Other students have built character skills through volunteering, life skills programs and leadership building — skills that will help them at the next level.

"As a teacher, finding placement for students after graduation is a top priority," Neuwoehner teacher Susan Moser said. "Character education helps students interact and be more successful at staying in programs and socializing appropriately. It helps them learn the skills they need to be successful after leaving here." *Continued inside »*



"We've built momentum, and we've kept that momentum going. We are getting kids to mentor, volunteer and build relationships."

— Michele Hahn, occupational therapist at Neuwoehner

*Character Education, continued
from front cover*

But earning such national prestige has not caused students or staff to rest on their laurels. In fact, the opposite is taking place, with enthusiasm for improving the school's initiative taking a step up since winning the award in the spring.

"We've built momentum, and we've kept that momentum going," said Neuwoehner occupational therapist Michele Hahn. "We are getting kids to mentor, volunteer and build relationships. We set these things up and they just kept going!"

Last month, five Neuwoehner staff members traveled to Washington, D.C., to officially receive the National School of Character banner, as well as meet and share with other schools and organizations taking part in character-building initiatives.

"We were able to network with other schools and build on how to do more," said Neuwoehner teacher Michelle Laird, who attended the conference.

As Neuwoehner continues its three-year journey carrying the title of a School of Character, Arnsman Schwartz said they still have much room to grow.

"Character education really blends in well with the District's continuous classroom improvement initiative," Arnsman Schwartz said. "We hope to increase community and outside involvement. We have lots of plans to incorporate parents even more into the mix."

But what is first on Neuwoehner's to-do list? Deciding on a place to hang its new National School of Character banner. ■

To learn more about Schools of Character, visit www.character.org

Transportation Director Wins National Award

Kenny Mulder, SSD's director of transportation, recently received the 2014 Leadership Award from School Transportation News at the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) annual summit.



Kenny Mulder

SSD Superintendent Don Bohannon said Mulder demonstrates extraordinary leadership and is a true asset to SSD.

"Ken leads a department that safely and effectively transports thousands of students, the majority of whom have special needs, across St. Louis County on a daily basis," said Bohannon. "He is respected and trusted by staff, parents, students and partner district personnel for always focusing on what is best for kids." ■

To read more about Mulder's contribution to the field of student transportation, visit <http://bit.ly/mulderaward>

spotlight on STUDENT SUCCESS



Margot Epstein, a third-grade student who receives services from SSD at Meramec Elementary in the Clayton School District, was honored at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in Louisville, Kentucky, for her painting of a white tiger. The artwork was purchased by the APH museum that houses such items as Stevie Wonder's piano and Helen Keller's bible. ■

For more stories like these, visit SSD on Facebook at facebook.com/SSDStLCo

In Memoriam John C. Cary



John C. Cary

It is with tremendous sadness that we share that John C. Cary, SSD's superintendent, passed away in the early morning hours of Sept. 25.

Mr. Cary will be remembered for his countless contributions to education throughout St. Louis County and beyond. He served as superintendent of SSD since 2007 and earned the respect of staff, students, parents, fellow superintendents and many others. Prior to joining SSD, Mr. Cary worked in the Mehlville School District for 17 years, the last seven as Mehlville superintendent.

Mr. Cary was known among his colleagues and friends for his great sense of humor and approachable nature. He was very proud of SSD staff and the positive impact they have on students every day. Most of all, he was proud of the amazing accomplishments of the students served by SSD. He will be greatly missed. ■

While I am very proud and excited to begin this new chapter in my career with SSD, at the same time dealing with the unexpected loss of Mr. Cary has been very difficult.

However, I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work closely with Mr. Cary for nearly eight years. He was always willing to share his wisdom and experiences, as well as his time, and I learned so much from him.

That is how I know that Mr. Cary would have advised me to work closely with the Board of Education on its goals for the District and to continue furthering the spirit of collaboration between SSD and our partner districts in St. Louis County.

He would have stressed the importance of building relationships with District staff, parents and other stakeholders. He also would have told me that some of his most enjoyable experiences as a superintendent were spent visiting with students in classrooms and urged me to continue that tradition.

And he would have added that I should always remember that our top priority at SSD is to do what's best for kids.

I promise to take his advice.

Sincerely,

Don Bohannon

Superintendent, Special School District



Don Bohannon

The Special School District (SSD) Board of Education has named Donald L. Bohannon superintendent.

ABOUT MR. BOHANNON...

Age 51

Married to Melisa

Four children, 2 grandchildren

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Superintendent, SSD, October 2014
- Associate Superintendent, SSD, July 2014
- Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, SSD, 2004-2014
- Speech-Language Pathologist, SSD, 1986

EDUCATION:

- Bachelor's and master's degrees, both in speech-language pathology
- Specialist degree in educational administration

Board of Education

- **Dr. Dan Cuneo**, Board President
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Board Vice President
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- **Mr. John F. Koeper**, Board Secretary
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- **Mr. Don Bohannon**, Superintendent
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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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Special Edition is a publication of the Communications Department of Special School District of St. Louis County.
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NEWS FROM SSD



**Special School District
of St. Louis County**
12110 Clayton Road
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ST. LOUIS, MO
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BUILDING PROJECT UPDATES

proposition S

Investing in student success

Check out photos of construction progress on the new building that will replace the current Northview High School at http://bit.ly/prop_s

The Northview construction, along with renovations and building projects at several other SSD schools, was made possible by voters' investment in SSD and its students through the passage of Proposition S in 2012. ■

