Former SSD Student Who is Deaf Teaches Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Zachary Jodlowski, an SSD teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing, brings a wealth of personal and professional experience to his teaching position.

Jodlowski himself is deaf and he received many SSD services beginning in 1999 at several schools in partner districts, including Parkway and Brentwood. He counts access to visual language (American Sign Language) and spoken language as being most beneficial to him.

“Through those interventions, I was able to improve my proficiency in both languages, giving me the same bilingual access that I had in my home environment,” he said.

Jodlowski, who was taught in high school by a teacher who is deaf, said he was inspired by a great number of his SSD teachers. And although he had some doubts about being an effective teacher even in his last semester of graduate school, he said it wasn’t he began student-teaching that he really fell in love with teaching.

“Robin Chickering and Angie Aromando (SSD teachers) were some of my greatest inspirations because they showed me that it was possible for a deaf person to become a teacher of the deaf in a mainstream setting,” said Jodlowski.

Jodlowski began his SSD teaching career at Parkway West High School in the Parkway School District in 2015.

Area coordinator for the deaf and hard of hearing Wendy Jensen said Jodlowski works alongside many of the same SSD staff that worked with him when he was a student. Continued inside »

Interpreters Meet Student Needs

Interpreters play a vital role in equalizing educational access to communication by meeting cultural and linguistic needs.

And while interpreters facilitate communication by providing services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, they do much more than that.

“I help children develop independence, learn how to get along with peers on the playground, take turns in a classroom and all of those daily lessons that students learn,” said Sally Backer, an SSD interpreter at various schools.

Backer became interested in being an interpreter while in college. Her brother who is deaf was her roommate. Backer wanted to be able to communicate with anyone who might spend time in the apartment that they shared. She took some classes and became hooked.

Backer enjoys collaborating with other SSD staff to brainstorm ideas and solutions to help students.

According to the Hearing Health Foundation, one in five Americans have hearing loss in at least one ear and three out of every 1,000 children are born deaf or hard of hearing.

Erica Gamma, an SSD interpreter at Brown Elementary School in the Hazelwood School District, said she gets great satisfaction in seeing the growth and development in the students.

“They all have their own personalities and it is really awesome to see them achieve their goals and flourish,” said Gamma.
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“We feel fortunate to have a teacher who can understand the needs of our students from the perspective of someone who is not only deaf himself, but also was a student in SSD’s program not so long ago,” said Jensen.

Jensen said Jodlowski’s recent experiences with college and graduate school make him the ideal teacher for supporting students who are currently preparing to transition from high school to college or employment. “Not only can he guide them through the technical processes, but he can also give them some inside perspective,” she said.

Jodlowski said his favorite part about teaching is getting to see students develop into amazing adults.

“I hope to give students a role model to look up to and refer to when discussing their concerns regarding their transition out of SSD and navigating the hearing world,” said Jodlowski. “It really helps the students, if they are struggling with their deafness, to have someone they can believe when that person says, ‘I know what you are going through, and you will overcome the obstacles you are facing.’”

SSD’s countywide program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing currently serves about 350 students.

For information about deaf and hard of hearing resources, visit http://bit.ly/ssddhoh

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- SSD has supported a parent/family resource center and parent education for the last 25 years.
- SSD’s Parent Education and Diversity Awareness administrators are all parents of students or adults who have received services from SSD.
- All materials and workshops are free and open to all members of the community.
- SSD’s Family & Community Resource Center has the largest disability-related library in the state of Missouri.
- The Family & Community Resource Center and SSD’s Instructional Resource Center are both located on the ground floor of the SSD Central Office building, 12110 Clayton Road, Town & Country, MO 63131.

Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament

The Special Education Foundation (SEF) held its 14th annual Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament on Oct. 10. The tournament had its best year ever, raising more than $300,000 to support programs for students with disabilities.

SSD staff volunteered and contributed in many ways. The tournament committee, which worked for six months to plan and execute the event, was largely composed of SSD teachers, staff and retirees. More than 60 others volunteered on the day of the tournament. The silent auction boasted more than 100 tempting baskets full of items donated by District personnel and two SSD departments — Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Audiology and Early Childhood — each sponsored a golf hole for $1,000.

In addition, many schools and departments raised $250 each for the Kid to Camp effort. A raffle, which was held as part of the event, raised $7,300 overall. Every year, SSD schools compete to sell the most raffle tickets, with the winning school receiving the traveling Remarkable Effort of Distinction (RED) Apple Trophy. This year’s winning school, Northview High School, will receive Cardinals tickets next summer and a pizza party from California Pizza Kitchen, which also donated 20 percent of receipts each Thursday in September to the SEF. SSD is proud to partner with the SEF, which provides so many valuable resources and opportunities to District students and teachers.

Honor a Teacher

Consider honoring a teacher with a donation to the SEF — it’s a great way to thank them for their dedication to students with disabilities. The Foundation will send a letter to the teacher regarding your gift with no mention of the amount. In turn, you will receive a letter of acknowledgement. Your donation is tax deductible.

For more information about the SEF, visit www.sef-stl.org.

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. Application deadlines start in January.

Subscribe to the SSD Unfiltered e-newsletter to get the latest info about parent education workshops, SSD programs and other special education-related topics delivered straight to your email inbox: http://bit.ly/ssdenews

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