The Measure of Success

Awards honor students, staff, community for outstanding achievements

Ryan Plambeck knows a thing or two about perseverance.

When Ryan started as a freshman at Hazelwood West High School, he was in modified classes, participated in no extracurricular activities, rarely spoke and always chose to eat lunch in a classroom away from his peers. He got lost navigating the building and would often forget his schedule or his room numbers.

With a diagnosis of language impairment and Asperger syndrome, Ryan has challenges communicating and with social interactions. But through consistent hard work, Ryan has made tremendous strides.

Now, as a senior, Ryan is in the general education setting for all of his classes. He is an active member of Hazelwood West’s Earth and Sky Club and the Art and Fibers Club, with some of his art being displayed at local art fairs. He participates in the Summer Work Experience Program and serves as an inspiration to other students.

Ryan’s perseverance and indomitable spirit are what made him a recipient of this year’s Rosemary Zander Award. The Rosemary Zander Award, the highest honor for students who receive services from SSD, is awarded each year in recognition of remarkable achievements.

SSD speech-language pathologist Matthew Moellerling nominated Ryan for this year’s award.

“Ryan has inspired me,” Moellerling said. “He has accomplished so much with so many obstacles stacked against him. In my 10-plus years of teaching, I have never witnessed such a drastic change.”

That drastic change is the driving force behind everything at SSD, and student success stories such as Ryan’s are unfolding every day throughout St. Louis County. But through consistent hard work, Ryan has made remarkable achievements.

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To recognize those community members who share that commitment to student success, SSD established the Special Ambassador Award. Each year, Special Ambassador Awards go to individuals or to groups that demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students, staff and mission of SSD.

One of this year’s winners is Hazelwood West journalism teacher Chris Holmes, who has a deep understanding of the benefits of inclusion. As a parent of a son with autism, he has a true appreciation for students with disabilities. Holmes is an enthusiastic and devoted teacher who welcomes all students with disabilities in his classroom and celebrates the unique gifts of each student. In Holmes’ classroom, students have a safe haven — a place where they can be themselves and where they are accepted and appreciated. He is a champion and ambassador for students of all ability levels.

“We’re all ambassadors, inspirational conduits of others and for others — whether they be our spouses, children, hobbies, careers or colleagues,” Holmes said. “It’s cliché to say I would not be as good — as good a husband, father, teacher or friend — if it weren’t for these personal ambassadors in my life. But it is an undeniable fact.”

In addition to recognizing students and community members, SSD also has established several awards to recognize outstanding staff members. The district’s Building Block, Lasting Impression, Key to the Classroom and Teacher of the Year awards recognize staff members. The district’s Building Block, Lasting Impression, Key to the Classroom and Teacher of the Year awards recognize staff members.

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From left: Instructor Adam Holt, Robert Patzius, James Giesler, Tonesha Vinson and Brandon Allen.

Students from South Technical High School participated in the Missouri Welding Institute’s inaugural high school welding competition. Ninety students participated from both Missouri and Kansas. South Tech students earned four of the 10 prizes awarded. Robert Patzius earned the first-place $11,900 scholarship. James Giesler took second place, earning a $5,950 scholarship. Tonesha Vinson placed fourth and Brandon Allen placed ninth, both earning $500 scholarships.

Check out www.ssdmo.org to see profiles and pictures of all of this year’s Rosemary Zander Award recipients.
Ken Holzapfel will be the first to tell you that everything he does with the Work Experience Program at McCluer High School is for the benefit of his students. He sets high expectations for his students, and they rise to the occasion. He has dedicated his professional career to creating programs that build their skills and enhance their potential for a successful life after high school. With more than 23 years experience with SSD, Holzapfel is always searching for new opportunities for his students to gain valuable, real-life work experience. When he first arrived at McCluer six years ago, there was only one work site that was being accessed by about five students. Since then, Holzapfel has expanded the Work Experience Program to include three sites, which offer a variety of opportunities for all of his students. Holzapfel even began a small catering business that the students helped start.

"Understanding that he had a group of students for whom the traditional route to transitional programming was not appropriate, Ken actively pursued new options. He is all about the kids," said his supervisor Vicki McNamara.

He also has developed a functional life skills lab at high school that affords students the chance for hands-on activities centered around cooking, cleaning, and self-care. Students are also exposed to transition planning and career exploration in the school-based portion of the program. Holzapfel finds his reward in seeing the progress that his students make and in the relationships he’s been able to form with his students in helping them realize their full potential.

SSD Teacher of the Year Ken Holzapfel is congratulated by Superintendent John Cary.

SSD Teacher of the Year Offers Students Recipe for Success Beyond School

Key to the Classroom

The Key to the Classroom Award honors the top teachers at SSD. The district has more than 2,700 teacher-level staff.

• Lisa Andrade, itinerant teacher of orthopedic impairment, SSD
• Liz Charlton, Wylie Middle, Clayton School District
• Lisa Fitch, Ridge Meadows Elementary, Rockwood School District

LASTING IMPRESSION AWARD WINNERS

SSD honors other dedicated individuals within the district through the Lasting Impression Award. Created in 2006, it is awarded to support staff who have made a difference in the lives of students both within and outside the classroom.

• Doug Austin, systems administrator, SSD
• Ralph Barron, technical support analyst, SSD
• Patty Benner, audiologist assistant at Litizinger School, SSD

Special Ambassador Individual winners are:

• Owen Bennett, student at Highland Heights Elementary, Parkway School District
• Chris Holmes, student at Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District
• SuSanelle Matthews, Access office manager, St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley
• Art McCoy, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, Ferguson-Floissant School District
• Sister Rita McGovern, retired director of admissions, Nazareth Living Center
• Katherine Sproul, volunteer coordinator, Feed My People

Ken Holzapfel, McCluer High, Ferguson-Floissant School District
• Cheryl Lindsey, Wild Horse Elementary, Rockwood School District
• Teri Linduff, Ladue Early Childhood Center, Ladue School District

Special Ambassador Owen Bennett

Building Block Award winners honor the district’s outstanding paraprofessionals for their significant contributions to the lives of SSD students. SSD has more than 1,700 paraprofessionals.

• Elaine Brete, Crate Train Elementary, Parkway School District
• Matt Kaudrich, NewGothenburg, SSD
• Kathleen Kidwell, Kelling Elementary, Rockwood School District
• Jessica Loshier, Central Middle, Parkway School District
• Dan Mueller, Ritenour High, Ritenour School District

Rosemary Zander Award winners

• Paul Anschutz, Lindbergh High / South Technical High, Lindbergh School District / SSD
• Charlene Behnam, Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District
• David Brown Hazelwood West High, Hazelwood School District

Ken Holzapfel

Special Ambassador Chris Holmes and Assistant Superintendent Lynne Midyett

Special Ambassador Award winners

The Special Ambassador Award is the highest recognition given by SSD. It is presented to members of the community who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students and/or staff of SSD.

• Tony McGarvey, construction supervisor, SSD
• Mike Mullen, bus driver, SSD

Special Ambassador Group winners are:

• NAPA FT Operations
• Parc Procurement

Special Ambassador Lynne Midyett

• Tonya Thomas, Affton Early Childhood Center, Affton School District

special Program winners

• Variety the Children’s Charity of St. Louis

• Richmond Heights School District

Losing Impression Award winner Mandi Jones

South Tech student honored as SSD Tech Prep Student of the Year

When it comes to exceptional students, Peter Bennett is a picture-perfect example.

Peter was selected as the 2011 Tech Prep Student of the Year for SSD. At South Technical High School, Peter is a standout student in the Graphic Production and Printing program, earning a straight A average in the program.

“The other students in the program look up to Peter’s leadership,” said Graphic Production and Printing instructor Bruce Gard. “He is an outstanding young man with a bright future ahead of him.”

Peter photographs Choir events, serves as a mentor for students that have questions, and is committed to the technical organizations, and technical education, maintains compact disc covers, postcards, slide shows and advertisements, posters, and as a mentor for students that have questions, and is committed to the technical organizations, and technical education, maintains compact disc covers, postcards, slide shows and advertisements, posters, and as a mentor for students that have questions, and is committed to the technical organizations, and technical education, maintains compact disc covers, postcards, slide shows and advertisements, posters, and as a mentor for students that have questions, and is committed to the technical organizations, and technical education, maintains compact disc covers, postcards, slide shows and advertisements, posters, and as a mentor for students that have questions, and is committed to the technical organizations, and technical education, maintains 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