What does it take to be named a Rosemary Zander Award winner?

An indomitable spirit, a will to succeed and an outstanding attitude.

And such is the case with each of this year’s 24 honorees. The Rosemary Zander Award, the highest honor for SSD students, is awarded each year in recognition of remarkable achievements. This year’s winners were honored at the annual Commitment to Kids Banquet in April.

“All of this year’s winners are outstanding individuals with remarkable achievements,” SSD Superintendent John Cary said. “Each of them is a true testament that with drive, determination, and an unwavering will to succeed, truly amazing things can occur. Each of these students represents what SSD is all about.”

Founded in 1988, the Rosemary Zander Award program has long recognized the accomplishments of students receiving services from SSD. Students are recognized for success in a range of categories — academics, arts, athletics, communications, vocational training, employment, independent living skills, community service and extracurricular activities.

This year’s honorees range in age from 5 to 21 and hail from across St. Louis County. While their achievements are varied, their stories all tell of students who possess positive attitudes and a drive for success.

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What does it mean to receive a Rosemary Zander Award? The answer to that question is as varied and colorful as the personalities of the honorees. To give some perspective, we asked four students to reflect on the accomplishment and what it meant to them.

Miguel Miranda and William DesSimone, SSD students at MRH Early Childhood Center, develop fine motor skills and express their creativity.

Ben Bond, a third grader at Hancock Early Childhood Center, says, “I came to Hancock in second grade. I did not have a power wheelchair. I have one now. I feel honored.”

Minela Duracak, a fourth grader at Hancock Early Childhood Center, says, “I came to Hancock in second grade. I did not have a power wheelchair. I have one now. I feel honored.”

They gave me an award that looked like a star and said “Ben Bond” on it! I showed my family. I brought it to school to show my friends. I got to go onto the stage and talk in the microphone. I said “thank you” to the people.

MINELA DURACAK
Hancock Place Elementary School
Hancock Place School District

My name is Minela Duracak. I was born in Germany. I am in fourth grade at Hancock Elementary School.

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repetitive and stereotyped in communication skills, social characteristics of impairment that share many of the core closely related disabilities includes the classical form ASD – impairments.

for individuals with visual CCTV – A CCTV system is a portable assistive technology device that magnifies print onto a computer or television screen for students with limited strength, vitality or acute health problems.

impairments. ASD – Autism spectrum disorder refers to a broad definition of autism that includes the classical form of the disorder as well as closely related disabilities that share many of the core characteristics of impairment in communication skills, social interactions, and restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior.

ASL – American Sign Language is a method of communicating by using hand signs. Each sign represents either one word or a concept that is typically expressed with several spoken words. For words that do not have a sign, finger spelling is used.

(continued from front cover) I have improved in subjects like reading, mathematics and writing, I deserve this award because I have become independent in so many different ways. I now eat and drink on my own, and I was not able to do that at my old school. I can cut paper using regular scissors. I can type papers in class all by myself. I can open and close documents on the computer, too. I can now color by myself if someone outlines the pictures for me. I can communicate using a walkie-talkie and tell my teacher when I need her.

My buddies help me in music, and PE. class. I let my buddy know when I need to go to the library. I can push the buttons on the CCTV to help me read independently. This has helped me to now read at a fifth-grade level.

I am happy to have received my power wheelchair because it has increased my independence. My power wheelchair helps me move myself to places that I need to go. I am very glad that I have received the Rosemary Zander Award. I am proud of myself for receiving this award and for making so many accomplishments while I have been at Hancock Elementary School. ■

SAM ZOOLE
Nipher Middle School
Kirkwood School District

These are my feelings about receiving the Rosemary Zander Award.

All I really want to say is that I hope people could be inspired by this to overcome what others may say cannot be done. Take for example, autism.

When I was diagnosed at the age of three, there were people who said that it would be impossible to beat and even someone (I’m not going to say names) said that I would have to be put in an institution. These things did not stop my mother and me though, and within six years, I was officially undiagnosed.

Nowadays, I would like this short story here to tell people something, mainly that you can help someone regardless of who says it’s impossible.

Another thing is that there is hope for autistic people. My aunt also has autism, and she has a job she loves and good pay. If she can do that with autism, and if I could beat autism, then I am sure your friend or loved one can do the same.

It also gave me a sense of satisfaction to receive that award, since it’s pretty much a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as well as at least thinking I inspired people to not lose hope for their autistic loved one.

That’s about it for what I think and feel about the award. So remember, autism can be helped and beaten, and don’t listen to people who say it can’t. ■

MARQUISE GRIFFIN
Clayton High School
Clayton School District

When my itinerant, Ms. Erika Van Order, informed me that I was nominated for the Rosemary Zander Award, of course I was excited. But I learned a long time ago not to be arrogant. I was humbled that she nominated me.

When I received the news that I was chosen as one of the recipients, I was humbled twofold. I thanked God for the honor. I do not see myself as someone who is so deserving of high recognitions.

My mission in life is not about collecting trophies and medals to display on a shelf. My mission is not to be honored by others regardless of who says it’s impossible. My mission is about helping someone else. My mission is not about collecting trophies and medals to display on a shelf. My mission is not to be honored by others regardless of who says it’s impossible. My mission is about helping someone else.

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2009 Rosemary Zander Award Winners

Lisa Adams: Mehlville High School, Mehlville School District
Benjamin Blair: Hazelwood West High School, Hazelwood School District; North Technical High School, Special School District
Emily Boerschig: Bayless High School, Bayless School District
Ben Bond: Ladue Early Childhood Center, Ladue School District
Janeth Calderon: Brentwood High School, Brentwood School District
John Collins: Neuwoehner School, Special School District
Jessica Delgado: Crestwood Elementary School, Lindbergh School District
Minela Duracak: Hancock Elementary School, Hancock Place School District
Joe Everett: Hazelwood West High School, Hazelwood School District; North Technical High School, Special School District
Dino Galic: Oakville High School, Mehlville School District
Betsy Grebe: Lindbergh Early Childhood Center, Lindbergh School District
Marquise Griffin: Clayton High School, Clayton School District
John LeRoy: Hazelwood West High School, Hazelwood School District
Robert Mitchell II: Oakville High School, Mehlville School District
Kathleen Moore: NEXT Program, Special School District
Kirk Moore: Hazelwood West High School, Hazelwood School District
Justin Moslander: NEXT Program, Special School District
Alvin Potter: Lucas Crossing Elementary Complex, Normandy School District
Jeffrey Scott: Webster Groves High School, Webster Groves School District
Keith Smith: Oakville High School, Mehlville School District
Brendan Staub: Washington Middle School, Mehlville School District
Lauren Vandemore: Oakville High School, Mehlville School District
LaSheena Williams: Riverview Gardens High School, Riverview Gardens School District
Sam Zoole: Nipher Middle School, Kirkwood School District

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