“To the season of giving, and that rings true for the staff of Special School District as well. SSD employees once again are taking part in Project Hope, an annual holiday giving campaign organized by the district’s social work department to help brighten the holidays for district students in need.

Social work administrator Amber Auslander, chairperson for last year’s campaign, said helping SSD families during the holiday season is a rewarding experience.

“It is so emotional and heart-warming,” Auslander said. “The families are so overwhelmed and appreciative. It’s amazing to see what a difference we can make. It really humbles you and makes you so happy to be a part of the process.”

Boysen agreed.

“Because of everything these families deal with and struggle with year round, if we can make it a little easier for them, what more can you ask for,” she said.

Auslander said Project Hope is a natural extension of what the SSD social workers do throughout the year. As school social workers, they work year round to help connect students and their families with resources they need to meet their needs. School social workers provide a dizzying array of services that include crisis intervention, conflict resolution, anger management and social skill development. They also lend their expertise to parents by working to facilitate support at home, assisting in accessing and utilizing school and community resources, and alleviating stress.

“It’s very difficult because you know the need doesn’t go away after the holidays,” Auslander said. “That’s why we work so hard to do this every year. If we can give people a little break from their current crisis and just allow them to have a holiday, it’s priceless. There’s nothing more joyous and rewarding than to give that to a family.”
A Day of Giving Back

On Oct. 3, hundreds of SSD employees and their families participated in the third annual SSD Serve, a day of volunteering and giving back to other local organizations that serve young people and the disability community.

“It’s a wonderful event to reach out to the community and to partner agencies, as well as to connect with students and colleagues,” SSD Superintendent John Cary said.

Volunteer activities ranged from assisting athletes at Rancen Jordan Pediatric Specialty Hospital in a baseball game to making scarecrows at St. Louis Arc’s annual Arc in the Park picnic. Other organizations helped through SSD Serves include: Autism Speaks; Edgewood Children’s Center; Epworth Children & Family Services; Ivydene Center for Autism; KidsSmart; Kids Under Twenty One (KUTO); Special Needs Soccer Association (SPENSA); Therapeutic Horsemanship; and YMCA of Greater St. Louis.

Since its inception in 2007, more than 600 SSD employees and family members have volunteered their time to the annual event.

To view photos from SSD Serves 2009, visit the SSD Web site at www.ssdk12.mo.us and click on the link to the 2009 SSD Serves photos.

Program Measures Progress for Early Childhood Students

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has adopted SSD’s model for measuring early childhood special education outcomes as a tool for programs throughout the state.

A recent federal law requires educators to collect data regarding students when they enter and exit early childhood special education programs in an effort to measure the outcomes and success of the programs. SSD’s measures include collecting data on each student annually.

“Our method gives a detailed picture of the progress each child is making,” said Martha Disbennett, SSD’s director of early childhood special education.

SSD staff developed the program over the past four years. The curriculum-based evaluation model measures students’ progress in five developmental categories — social/emotional, physical, representational, cognitive and essential literacy skills.

Disbennett said SSD’s evaluation model includes a rating system for each of the categories.

“Our method is very data-driven,” she said. “It offers a clear way to measure how well a child is progressing in each of the five categories.”

To share the model with educators throughout the state, DESE officials invited Disbennett to present SSD’s program during a statewide training program in November.

For more information about the early childhood data collection and reporting process, visit http://dese.mo.gov/divsped/ed/docs/EC09/relatedcolorPDF.pdf.

What Do You Think Makes a Great Teacher?

“They are nice, friendly and they understand you. They are good friends.”

“They make you work.”

“They help you so you can have a good life in the future.”

These are all answers from SSD students to the question, “What makes a great teacher?”

Now it’s your turn to tell us what you think makes a great teacher.Nominate a classroom teacher for the 2009/2010 Key to the Classroom Award. Complete the following form and answer the three questions on a separate sheet of paper and return it to the Communications Department (by e-mail: mcogar@ssdmo.org; by fax: 314.989.8470; or by mail: 12110 Clayton Road, Town & Country, MO, 63131) by Jan. 4, 2010.

Part I - Nominee Information

Teacher’s Name:

School:

District:

Part II - Nominator Information

Your Name:

Home Address:

City: State: Zip:

E-mail:

Home Phone: Work Phone:

Relationship with SSD:

Nominator Signature: Date:

1. In a few paragraphs, describe what makes the nominee a highly-skilled and successful teacher. Please provide specific examples.

2. What attributes make the nominee stand out in the school in which he or she works?

3. Please describe the nominee’s ability to speak on behalf of all educators and his/her ability to withstand a busy schedule.

SSD Director Saluted As One of North County’s Newest Generation of Leaders

Some people say leaders are born, while other theories point to the fact that leadership skills can be developed. But whenever the skills came from that allow certain people to motivate and influence others, to be recognized as a leader is a significant honor. And to be recognized early in a career means a leader’s impact will be long lasting.

North County Incorporated, a regional economic and community development organization, recently honored 30 leaders in their 30s. The awardees were selected for their commitment to North County through their professional and community involvement.

SSD Director Carla Addoh was one of the 30 distinguished leaders recognized.

Addoh began her career in the classroom as a speech/language pathologist in the Normandy School District. Since then she has worked as an area coordinator and now serves as director for the Jennings, Normandy, Pattonville, University City and Webster school districts.

“Carla is a role model and an inspiration to me,” said Mariah Spanglet, an SSD teacher Addoh supervises who was selected as a Missouri State Teacher of the Year finalist in 2008. “She has a gift of communicating effectively, is extremely supportive and truly cares about kids.”

Addoh recently chaired the Service Delivery Committee for the Ferguson-Florissant Partnership Plan. She also has been involved with the Missouri Board of Healing Arts, the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, the Principals Fellow Program and Autism Speaks.