Parents Hail “Life-Changing” Training

Close your eyes and picture an educational leader.

There’s a good chance the image in your mind will be that of a teacher, a school administrator or possibly a public policy maker.

Yet the nearest educational leader may be closer than you think: It’s you.

That’s the message that participants from the Fred Saigh Parent Leadership Institute (PLI) have been promoting for the past several years. Since 2006, the institute has been committed to providing information, training and resources to local parents of children with disabilities. The institute is present by the SSD Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Department with funding from the Special Education Foundation.

“PLI has gone beyond our expectations in its impact on parent involvement,” said Judy Presberg, administrative liaison for the SSD Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Department. “A majority of the participants have gone on to take leadership roles in their schools and school districts or have become their district’s representative on the SSD Parent Advisory Council.”

Each year, the PLI provides training to dozens of parents on a range of subjects designed to help in their child’s educational journey. Participants receive training on everything from how to be a part of productive meetings to how to positively interact and collaborate with other parents and school officials. Parents also are exposed to a broad array of new resources and gain access to a strong network of other parents, school officials and community leaders. Participants attend three full days of training, held on Saturdays one a month for three months.

“Life-changing.” That’s how Satonya Booker described her experience with the Parent Leadership Institute. Booker, who participated in the program last fall, is the mother of a second-grade student who receives services from SSD while attending Maramec Elementary School in the Clayton School District. “It was amazing. I have a much better sense of the importance of my role in dealing with and handling the issues related to my daughter Carmen’s education,” she said. “I feel like I’ve finally been given the tools I was seeking for so long.”

“From the very first day, the institute was really eye opening,” Booker continued. “The sessions are put together really well. You get to hear from so many people from so many different walks of life. You hear from service providers, teachers, adults with disabilities and other parents. It’s a great opportunity to learn how others in the same boat are dealing with the same issues.”

Brandie Martine, a 2006 graduate of the institute, shares Booker’s enthusiasm for the program. “The sessions are put together really well. You get to hear from so many people from so many different walks of life. You hear from service providers, teachers, adults with disabilities and other parents. It’s a great opportunity to learn how others in the same boat are dealing with the same issues.”

Parents Hail “Life-Changing” Training

Close your eyes and picture an educational leader.

There’s a good chance the image in your mind will be that of a teacher, a school administrator or possibly a public policy maker.

Yet the nearest educational leader may be closer than you think: It’s you.

That’s the message that participants from the Fred Saigh Parent Leadership Institute (PLI) have been promoting for the past several years. Since 2006, the institute has been committed to providing information, training and resources to local parents of children with disabilities. The institute is present by the SSD Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Department with funding from the Special Education Foundation.

“PLI has gone beyond our expectations in its impact on parent involvement,” said Judy Presberg, administrative liaison for the SSD Parent Education & Diversity Awareness Department. “A majority of the participants have gone on to take leadership roles in their schools and school districts or have become their district’s representative on the SSD Parent Advisory Council.”

Each year, the PLI provides training to dozens of parents on a range of subjects designed to help in their child’s educational journey. Participants receive training on everything from how to be a part of productive meetings to how to positively interact and collaborate with other parents and school officials. Parents also are exposed to a broad array of new resources and gain access to a strong network of other parents, school officials and community leaders. Participants attend three full days of training, held on Saturdays one a month for three months.

“Life-changing.” That’s how Satonya Booker described her experience with the Parent Leadership Institute. Booker, who participated in the program last fall, is the mother of a second-grade student who receives services from SSD while attending Maramec Elementary School in the Clayton School District. “It was amazing. I have a much better sense of the importance of my role in dealing with and handling the issues related to my daughter Carmen’s education,” she said. “I feel like I’ve finally been given the tools I was seeking for so long.”

“From the very first day, the institute was really eye opening,” Booker continued. “The sessions are put together really well. You get to hear from so many people from so many different walks of life. You hear from service providers, teachers, adults with disabilities and other parents. It’s a great opportunity to learn how others in the same boat are dealing with the same issues.”

Brandie Martine, a 2006 graduate of the institute, shares Booker’s enthusiasm for the program. “The sessions are put together really well. You get to hear from so many people from so many different walks of life. You hear from service providers, teachers, adults with disabilities and other parents. It’s a great opportunity to learn how others in the same boat are dealing with the same issues.”
On a recent Tuesday morning, Ann Deddens led a small group of students through a reading exercise at Spoede Elementary. With “Moe” the plush, green frog puppet perched upon her hand, she asked the students in her special education communications classroom to point to the words while reading along.

There were giggles and grins as Moe delivered kisses to the students for doing a good job. But when one young girl said she “didn’t know,” Deddens’ compassion for her students came through.

“Do I like it when you say that?” Deddens kindly asked the young girl.

“No,” she replied.

“No, I don’t because I don’t believe it,” Deddens reassured her. “You have a big brain. You are smart.”

And soon thereafter the girl was reading aloud.

“The biggest thing I try to accomplish is to have fun and make sure the children are having fun,” she said. “If they’re having fun, it ensures that the child is engaged. I also think it’s important to have high expectations for the students because they can learn whatever you expect them to learn.”

Deddens said she finds her reward in seeing a child’s perspective every day and in the relationships she’s been able to form with parents in helping them realize their children’s potential.

Soon Deddens will pass the torch to the 2010 Teacher of the Year. This year’s winner will be selected from among the 11 teachers named as Key to the Classroom winners.

While teachers have a great impact on the lives of students, there are numerous staff members throughout SSD who better the lives of students, there are numerous staff members throughout SSD who better the lives of students in their various roles. The Building Block and Lasting Impression awards recognize other SSD staff who exemplify outstanding skill and dedication to SSD students. This year’s winners in each category will be recognized during an awards ceremony in March.