Jacob Bartola

Jacob Bartola is an inspiration to all of those around him with his joyful spirit and dedication to learning. He is a student in the Mehlville School District and receives services from SSD.

Jake has surmounted numerous health obstacles throughout his young life. He has proven to be a great role model to his peers, and he has made great academic progress.

“Jake arrives to school every day with a smile on his face, and he possesses a laugh and positive attitude that is contagious,” said Nancy Wamser, an occupational therapist at Blades Elementary who co-nominated Jake for the Rosemary Zander Award. “He perseveres and keeps trying in spite of his challenges.”

Jake participates in Special Olympics and was a member of the Hugs 4 Life Club at Blades, in which students participate in activities that foster empathy, compassion and respect for others.

“Jake lights up a room with his enthusiasm and hard work,” said Wamser. “He is a real treasure.”

Brandon Moreno

Brandon Moreno has set a high standard for work ethic in SSD’s Community-Based Vocational Instruction (CBVI) program.

Brandon, a Rosemary Zander Award winner, is a student at SSD’s Southview School. He has worked at a number of CBVI sites, including Ronnie’s Plaza, China I and Delmar Gardens.

According to his Zander award nominator, SSD teacher Rebecca Seger, Brandon is a classroom leader and friend. “Brandon excels with accuracy and pride at his jobs,” she said. “And his smile speaks a thousand words. He brings joy to all of the people he serves.”

Brandon is a role model at Southview when it comes to communication. He not only understands English, but also Spanish, which is his family’s language. He uses some American Sign Language, as well as an augmentative communication device.

“Brandon is the guy who has achieved all that is set before him, with a smile and determination,” said Seger.

Yvonna Walker

Yvonna Walker, a student at Mehlville High School in the Mehlville School District, receives services from SSD. She has exceeded academic expectations and independently set a course for her future.

Yvonna is a member of the Friends Club, which gives students and opportunity to engage with students that have significant disabilities. “She shows patience, care and enthusiasm for others,” said Stephanie Ochoa, SSD teacher. “She assists the group in various crafts, cooking, and is a positive role model.”

According to Ochoa, Yvonna has overcome many challenges, but she doesn’t let that define her. “That has pushed her to come a strong, self-determined young woman,” she said.

“Her initiative demonstrates Yvonna’s willingness to be responsible for pursuing various interests and obtaining employment or more schooling after graduation,” said Ochoa.

“Yvonna’s warm heart and eagerness to succeed has become an inspiration for other students at Mehlville High School,” Ochoa added.