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Cruz Johnson climbs the rock wall at sixth-grade camp, which was held in November. Johnson is a student at Parkway West Middle School.



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of St. Louis County**
12110 Clayton Road
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SPECIAL EDITION



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 presented 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 once 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 Meramec 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. *continued on page 3*

Public Review Committee Seeks Input

Under Senate Bill 687, a Public Review Committee (PRC) is appointed every four years to review the operations of SSD and to make recommendations for improvement. Areas of review include SSD's structure, governance, administration, financial management, delivery of services, and cooperation with partner school districts.

Public comments will be accepted by the committee during the first 15 minutes of each regularly scheduled meeting. Each meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. and will be held at SSD Central Administrative Offices, 12110 Clayton Road in Town & Country. Upcoming meetings include:

- March 3
- April 7
- May 5
- June 2

In addition, written comments can be mailed to the SSD Central Administrative Offices attn. Public Review Committee. The PRC has nine members who are selected by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the SSD Parent Advisory Council and the SSD Governing Council. The committee is expected to issue its report later this year. For more information on the PRC, call the SSD Superintendent's Office at 314.989.8166. ■



(Top): Parents Anne Roux (left), who brought the concept of the Parent Leadership Institute to SSD, and Pinky Hunter share successful parenting strategies. (Middle): Kris Weingaertner-Hartke, SSD area coordinator, describes skills for effective communication. (Bottom): Parents learn stress relief through "laughter yoga."

Deddens' Reign Draws to a Close

SSD to Select 2010 Teacher of the Year, Names Other Award Winners

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.

Deddens' compassion and the way she connects with her students is one of the many reasons she was chosen as Special School District's 2009 Teacher of the Year.

"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 children 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.

Key to the Classroom

The Key to the Classroom Award recognizes SSD teachers for their achievements in the classroom and dedication to the success of SSD students. One recipient of this year's award will be selected as the 2010 SSD Teacher of the Year. Following are Key to the Classroom winners and their classroom locations:

Laura Blase
Affton Early Childhood Center
Affton School District

Mary Bunt
Wedgwood Elementary
Ferguson-Florissant School District

Joan Cather
Parkway West and Parc Provence
Parkway School District

Bevin Early
Litzsinger
Special School District

Jean Huelsing
South Technical High
Special School District

Diana Kuerz
Bayless Intermediate
Bayless School District

William Matthews
Neuwoehner
Special School District

Jessica Murray
Ladue Middle
Ladue School District

Vicki Nelson
Litzsinger
Special School District

Carrie Rackers
Ritenour High
Ritenour School District

Therese Shain
Bayless Intermediate
Bayless School District

Building Block

The Building Block Award honors SSD paraprofessionals who show outstanding skill and dedication to their students. Following are the 2010 Building Block Award winners and their classroom locations:

Kimberly Braxton
Hazelwood Central Middle
Hazelwood School District

Hope Curtis
Hazelwood Southeast Middle
Hazelwood School District

Anna Duke
MRH Elementary
MRH School District

Gregg Hulsey
Neuwoehner
Special School District

Mary Morgan
Ladue Middle
Ladue School District

Veronica Morgan
Hazelwood Central Middle
Hazelwood School District

Libbyanne Nguyen
Pattonville High
Pattonville School District

Robin Sanguinet
Lafayette High
Rockwood School District

Elizabeth Spector
McKelvey Elementary
Parkway School District

Karena Washington
Parkway Central Middle
Parkway School District

Lasting Impression

The Lasting Impression Award recognizes the achievements of dedicated SSD staff, working both inside and outside of the classroom. The winners of the 2010 Lasting Impression Award, and their work assignments, are:

Daniele Cerone-Griffin
Augmentative Communication Facilitator
Special School District

Vicki Everding
Speech/Language Pathologist
Lindbergh School District

Mary Pat Gilliam
Social Worker
Ferguson-Florissant School District

Linda Kremer
Psychological Examiner
Mehlville School District

Carissa Leuthen
Speech/Language Pathologist
Ladue School District

Chrissy Monolo
Augmentative Communication Facilitator
Special School District

Mary Ellen O'Hare
Positive Behavior Instructional
Support Facilitator
Special School District

Doris Patrick
Bus Aide
Special School District

Mary Pisoni
School Nurse
Special School District

Anne Reidel
Substitute Teacher
Bayless School District

Brian Schuchardt
Technology Support Specialist
Special School District

Karen Scobbie
Speech/Language Pathologist
Lindbergh School District

Ginny Scognamiglio
Augmentative Communication Facilitator
Special School District

Valerie Whitney
Area Coordinator
Special School
District

Barbara A. Williams
Bus Driver
Special School District

Parents Hail "Life-Changing" Training, continued from page 1

"I was really drawn to its message and wanted to be a positive, proactive member of the team making decisions about my son's education. The Parent Leadership Institute helped make that possible," Martine said.

And while Martine acknowledges that participation in the PLI represents a significant time commitment, she insists that it was worth every minute. "It is a big commitment on the front end, but it really makes your daily life so much easier in the end."

The Fred Saigh Parent Leadership Institute is now accepting applications for its next training session to be held Sept. 11, Oct. 2 and Nov. 6. Applications are due by March 31. At least one parent from each school district in St. Louis County and each SSD school will be chosen to participate. All parents are encouraged to apply. Parents of children receiving early childhood services and those with children in kindergarten through third grade will be given preference.

To download the application, visit www.ssd.k12.mo.us/PLI_application.pdf or contact Nancy Martin by e-mail at nmartin@ssdmo.org or by phone at 314.989.8194. ■

SSD teacher Ann Deddens, who teaches at Spoede Elementary in the Ladue School District, receives the 2009 Teacher of the Year Award from SSD Superintendent John Cary. The 2010 award winners, including Teacher of the Year, will be recognized at an awards ceremony next month.



Your Input Matters to Us
At SSD, one of our core values is sharing accurate, honest communication with stakeholders. One way we do this is through the district's Web site.

In order to better meet the needs of families served by the district, the SSD Communications Department will be conducting focus groups to gather feedback and ideas to develop a new Web site.

Focus groups will be offered at a variety of times. Please e-mail lmartinez@ssdmo.org or call 314.989.8288 if you are interested in participating in a focus group. ■

Special Edition is a publication of the Communications Department of Special School District of St. Louis County.

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