



# SPEED Newsletter

SPEED S.E.J.A. #802

## The Graduating Class of 2016

It was a week of joyful celebration at SPEED when 43 students and their families attended commencement ceremonies for the Program for Adaptive Learning and Independence School. There were tears of joy, celebrations of accomplishments and wonderful speeches given by graduates **Marcus Moore, James Matthews, and Tatiana Christian**. Video presentations highlighting the graduates' accomplishments evoked laughter and applause. Parents were brought to tears when the graduates presented them with long-stem roses in appreciation of their support. The students and audience alike were awestruck by **Ms. Angelyn Isaac's** acapella rendition of the National Anthem.



**Ms. Kimberly Sanders**, Governing Board Member from Crete-Monee 201U assisted the superintendent and principals in awarding diplomas. Short receptions followed so that families and staff could get lots of pictures with the graduates and enjoy dessert.



The PAL students graduated on May 26<sup>th</sup>, followed by Independence Seniors and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Both events took place in the Independence Gym and used the new stage purchased this year. This was the first time that PAL students graduated in the evening, allowing more family members to attend. The gym was decorated with artwork created by students under the guidance of **Mrs. Patricia Levange**, and a large sign custom-made by **Mr. Bryant Bennett**, a SPEED retiree.

Congratulations graduates, we wish you the best!



## Students Have Fun at PAL Prom



Congratulations to **Jordan Cooper**, District 206, and **Rhonda Roberts**, District 227, who were elected to be King and Queen of the 2016 PAL Prom. The Independence Gym was filled with beautiful young people in stunning tuxedos and gowns who clearly enjoyed the opportunity to dress up and dance. Many families joined the celebration and more than a few SPEED staff members were spotted dancing with students.

In keeping with this year's Fairy Tales theme, the prom committee transformed the gym into a wonderland. SPEED retiree, **Mr. Bryant Bennett** created many of the lovely decorations. The students also enjoyed a wonderful meal prepared by **Mr. Dennis Fares** and the Food Services staff. A good time was had by all!

## Students Awarded for Technology Achievements

Ten students were recognized for their achievements in the use of technology at SPEED's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Student Technology Awards on the evening of May 24<sup>th</sup>. Over 50 people were in attendance to celebrate the students' successes. Student achievement ranged from the use of assistive technology to speak, to the independent use of Chromebooks and iPads for learning. Students were awarded certificates and medals.

### Early Learning Center

**Azariyah Currie**, District 167

**Davarion Hardy**, District 170

**Jeremy Vittorelli**, District 172

### Independence Elementary School

**Franklin Buie**, District 163

**Tatiana Christian**, District 194

**Jamarion Price**, District 168

### Program for Adaptive Learning

**Roshad Nix**, District 201U

**Dapo Osunmakinde**, District 227

**Denesha Williams**, District 206

### Academy for Lifelong Learning

**Luis Santos**, District 206



Joining in the celebration of our students were **Dr. Donna Leak**, Superintendent, District 168, and **Dr. Delores Woods**, Governing Board Member, District 227.

The District's Assistive Technology Specialists **Jane Cornelius**, **Angelyn Isaac** and **Fallon Mack** organized and hosted the event.

## SPEED Academy Celebrates Spring



Academy for Lifelong Learning students gather for a group photo at their Spring Gala.



Students pose with garden art they created in Introduction to Basic Construction Skills. The art is available for sale at ALLURE, 410 Ashland, Chicago Heights.

## Special Olympians Bring Home Gold

The SPEED Racers excelled at the Spring Special Olympics Games held at Thornwood High School in May. Student athletes, under the guidance of **Coach John Lewis** brought home twenty-two medals. Four of the gold medalists qualified to participate in the Summer games at Illinois State University in June where **Larry Thomas** and **Detrick Freeman** won Gold medals in softball throw, and **Josh Shorts** earned a Bronze medal for the 50-M run.

Special thanks are in order to the many parents and these dedicated SPEED employees whose assistance at Thornwood was invaluable: **Julie Brulloths, Valerie Brulloths, John Maurek, Colin Jackson, Liz Gebbia** and **Rebecca Bruckner**.



### Gold Medal Winners

**Detrick Freeman**, Softball Throw, District 215  
**Kameron Jones**, 50 M Run and Softball throw, District 215  
**Joshua Shorts**, 50 M Run, District 170  
**Larry Thomas**, 50 M Run and Softball Throw, District 227  
**Jonathan Willis**, 50 M Run, District 233

### Silver Medal Winners

**Stephen Henley**, Softball Throw, District 206  
**Jonathan McEwen**, 50 M Run, District 201U  
**Roshad Nix**, Softball Throw, District 201U  
**Mira Rowe**, 50 M Run and Softball Throw, District 206  
**Steven Scott**, Softball Throw, District 227  
**Joshua Shorts**, 50 M Run, District 170  
**Timothy Tortorelli**, 50 M Run, District 206  
**Johnathan Tyler**, 25 M Wheelchair Race, District 162  
**Jonathan Willis**, Softball Throw, District 233

### Bronze Medal Winners

**Stephen Henley**, 50 M Run, District 206  
**Jonathan McEwen**, 50 M Run, District 201U  
**Princeton McGlown**, 100 M Walk, District 206  
**Alphonso Moffet**, 100 M Walk, District 206  
**Timothy Tortorelli**, Softball Throw, District 206



## ELC Special Olympics Close Year at Marian



Led by **Coach Liz Gebbia**, SPEED Young Athletes celebrated their first culminating event this year at Marion Catholic High School. Opening ceremonies included a torch run with participation of police officers from Chicago Heights and Prairie State College.

With assistance from more than 100 high school students from Marion and UNO, our ELC students showed their skills such as throwing and kicking at various stations. Students were awarded with certificates and ribbons before enjoying a picnic lunch with their high school helpers.

Young Athletes is the Special Olympics program for children and students age 2 through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Third through fifth grade students participate in the MATP – Motor Athletic Training Program. This is the fourth year that the SPEED Early Learning Center has participated in Young Athletes.

## Independence Yearbooks

A special thank you goes to **Ms. Angelyn Isaac** for her wonderful work on the Independence Yearbooks.

These beautiful keepsakes were provided to the students at Independence who had a good time sharing memories and collecting autographs.



## An Evening of Celebration

The evening of May 19<sup>th</sup> was a time to reflect on wonderful memories and honor the service of SPEED employees. A dinner was held at Idlewild Country Club to celebrate the accomplishments and careers of retirees **Vera Gill, Kathy Hufnagl, Diane Magdziak, Debbie Schuldt and Valerie Hooper**. **Janet Nozar** and **Sharon Nelson** were recognized for 20 years of service to SPEED. Guests were treated to video presentations highlighting the contributions of the attending employees, as well as a buffet dinner in a lovely setting. Honorees received keepsake gifts in thanks for their work. **Dan Tomblin** provided technology support, including dinner music. Governing Board members **Dr. Delores Woods** and **Ms. Merle Huckabee** were in attendance. Board President **Ron Bean** expressed appreciation for the important contributions the employees have made throughout their long careers at SPEED.

**Thank  
YOU!**

## Welcome DHH High School Students!

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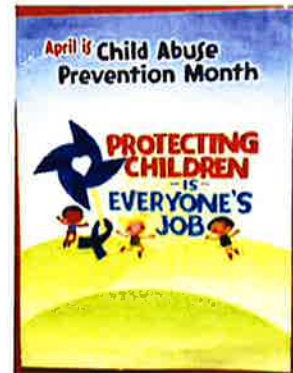
SPEED is delighted to be expanding our programming again. ECHO Cooperative, based in South Holland has been providing regional programming for students who are deaf and hard of hearing for more than 20 years. ECHO's high school districts decided to host their own programs, leaving ECHO with only two classrooms of students at Rich South within the SPEED membership area. So beginning in August of 2016 SPEED will provide the high school DHH program at Rich South High School. We have attempted to hire the available staff that was released by ECHO, and have had some success. The goal is to make only necessary changes during the first year. **Ms. Janet DeBruin** will be supervising the satellite classrooms and has been in contact with the families and their school districts. In the coming year, we will look at the feasibility of hosting the elementary DHH students closer to home, too.

## Educator Appreciation Week

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At SPEED, we celebrate teachers, and so many more individuals who work tirelessly to teach and support our students. By virtue of their employment, they are all educators. Whether the title is School Psychologist, Paraprofessional, Teacher, Occupational or Physical Therapist, Speech Pathologist, School Social Worker, Dean, or Hall monitor; whether they work in one school or travel to many; the impact on our students is enormous. Their dedication to students and the hard work they do every day is appreciated by many people they may never get to meet. In honor of Teacher Appreciation Week, SPEED hosted a complimentary breakfast. Principals gave out small tokens of appreciation, and the **SPEED Parent Organization** provided a delightful lunch to our staff for which we are grateful.

April was Child Abuse Prevention Month. To help build increased awareness, the Academy students created blue ribbons for every staff member. Posters featuring the blue pinwheel were provided to all of our member districts and could be found in all of our schools.



## In Sympathy

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Longtime Chicago Heights educator and SPEED board member Donald Aprati died in May.

Mr. Aprati worked in Chicago Heights School District 170 for 37 years — he started as a teacher and retired as principal. After retiring he taught English as a Second Language at Prairie State College and was a Principal Mentor for the State of Illinois.

He represented Bloom Township High School District on SPEED's Governing Board since 2010. He was elected as president of The Bloom Township High School Board of Education in 2013.

“Serving on two school boards can present a challenging schedule,” SPEED Superintendent Sharon Rossiter said. “However, it was only on rare occasions that he wasn't available to attend board meetings here at SPEED. Mr. Aprati demonstrated his continuous support for our work here at SPEED by attending and participating in many events.”

It goes without saying that this is a heartbreaking loss for SPEED, our Board, the administration, our staff and the families we serve.

## Superintendent's Message



**Ms. Sharon Rossiter**

As I look out on to an empty parking lot, it seems that each school year goes by a little more quickly than in the past. 2015/2016 was a year filled with excitement, celebration and change.

SPEED Connections Program for students with Autism and related disabilities got off to a great start and continues to grow. Our athletes won titles, medals, plaques and awards participating in the Chicago Area Alternative Education League, Special Olympics and Young Athletes.

We added Music classes at PAL and ELC and found the students truly enjoyed them. The ELC Library/Media

Center moved into a beautiful, larger room. This year, SPEED initiated 1:1 Learning through the use of individual iPads and Chromebooks for most of our students and a digital, interactive science curriculum at Independence School. The renovations to the Academy for Lifelong Learning were completed, providing many more learning opportunities for our young adults.

By the end of May, SPEED had provided workshops and training to more than 355 attendees at our CEO Academies. And, we had delivered 169 days of training on-site in our member districts. Our negotiations were completed with a new Collective Bargaining Agreement which provided salary increases for staff. The SPEED Leadership Team developed a District Improvement Plan and each school developed School Improvement Plans with a focus on improving student achievement. Our Joint Committee developed a new evaluation plan, as required by the State, piloted it with every teacher and completed this enormous task on schedule. We've been so very busy! And, our Extended School Year Program embracing the theme "Sportsmanship" has already begun.

In our efforts to be "*The Most Progressive Special Education District in Illinois*", we made positive improvements for our students and our member districts which often required changing the way we work. Change is challenging for most of us. Yet, I am reminded that our children and their families don't have time to wait for us to become comfortable with change. They are still growing and moving through the grades needing to learn twice as much as others as we contemplate needed improvements and how our daily work is impacted by change. It's like an old TV commercial claimed "We build the plane while it's flying." My thoughts are that it will always be this way in progressive, strong, effective education settings.

So, while we have some warm weather, sunshine and time away from school. Let's see to it that we become rested, reflective and rejuvenated. Include a little more laughter with loved ones in our lives. Summer vacation is a well-deserved break before we *SPEED* into future improvements in programs and services in August. It's truly an honor and a privilege for me to serve as superintendent of such a devoted learning community, and I look forward to the new challenges that await us in 2016/2017. I offer my gratitude and appreciation to the staff, the students, their families and our member districts for their ongoing support of SPEED and wish you a wonderful summer.

## Important Dates To Remember

- **August 22, 2016 — Students Start School – 1:10 p.m. Dismissal**
- **September 2, 2016 — Staff Half-Day In-service – 11:10 a.m. Early Dismissal**
- **September 5, 2016 — Labor Day - No School**
- **September 16, 2016 — Half-Day School Improvement Day – 11:10 a.m. Early Dismissal**
- **October 6, 2016 — Half-Day School Improvement Day – 11:10 a.m. Early Dismissal**
- **October 7, 2016 — Staff Institute Day - No School**
- **October 10, 2016 — Columbus Day - No School**



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