



# The Mid-State Messenger

November 2020

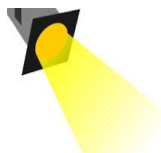
## Virtual Agency Fair

Joan Saatkamp, Transition Specialist, put together a virtual agency fair for 14 Bond County High School students and their families on Tuesday, October 27th, via Google Meets. Each agency explained the services they can provide for our students, whether it be during or after high school. The agencies in attendance included: The Arc of Illinois, EPIC, MERS Goodwill, FAYCO, Special Olympics, Fast Track, Future Bound, and DRS. Parents were provided the agencies' contact information prior to the meeting so they can contact them with individual questions they may have. Additional virtual agency fairs will be offered to other member districts at the beginning of November.

## Pirate Day at Jefferson School



Teacher Keri Buscher at Jefferson school in Vandalia hosted a Pirate Day! On this day the students participated in a Pirate themed escape room where they had clues to be solved with conflict resolution activities. All the students picked a Pirate name, they did Pirate graphing in math, played "Pin the Patch on the Pirate" in PE, created a handprint Pirate in Art, and are sequencing the book [How I Became a Pirate](#). Fun times!



## Employee Spotlight: Making a Difference

Laura Snyder, Joan Saatkamp, and Randi Riemann, Transition

Specialists serving MSSE member districts, were honored with the *You Make the Difference* award during the Mid-State Special Education Executive Committee Board meeting on October 21, 2020. The transition specialists implement a variety of transition services utilizing funding through the Department of Human Services (DHS) Secondary Transition Experience Program (STEP) as well as provide the important supports and expertise as students plan and transition during the high school years. In addition to partnering with businesses to obtain work experiences, exploring possible future careers and collaborating with teachers, guidance counselors, and families about post high school options, the transition specialists took advantage of an additional program through DHS. During the spring, summer and fall, MSSE transition specialists made over 1000 direct contacts with students via phone calls, Zoom or Google Meet, and in-person to ensure the well-being of students thru a connection with a caring adult. The MSSE Governing Board, Executive Committee, and administration, recognize their dedication and commitment to the education and well-being of all students as well as for their expertise in the area of transition services, innovation, compassion, and heartfelt enthusiasm for the students, staff, families, and communities served.



### Learning Life Skills

For Mr. A. at Litchfield Middle School, cooking incorporates his math and life skills. Ms. Johnsey assists him with using measurements to work alongside fractions, as well as reading and comprehending the recipes. So far, they've made oreo truffles and



homemade chocolate cake with buttercream chocolate frosting (he's a chocoholic). He also picks out his lunch on Fridays by getting on google, typing in the name of the restaurant he wants, plus the word 'menu' to select what he'd like to eat. Ms. Johnsey orders it exactly as he writes it, so he has to double check that everything is correct.

Ms. Johnsey states that, "Mr. A is a very bright boy who has a lot of independent skills and an independent nature. I love fostering that within him."

### We Are Only as Blind as We Want to Be

-Maya Angelou



Carson, a Freshman at South Fork High School, has attended Illinois School for the Visually Impaired until

just recently. When presented with the reality of full remote learning again this school year or potentially attending his home high school in-person, Carson knew that he was not going to be happy with full remote learning. He had also been thinking about trying a traditional

school again and decided now was a good time. With the help and guidance of April Wilson, Vision Itinerant, and the ISVI staff, Carson is now fully enrolled at South Fork High School. He continues to work on his Braille skills weekly and is seen here transcribing practice sentences on his Perkins Braille. Special thank you to the amazing staff at South Fork for embracing this opportunity for Carson and providing the accommodations that he needs in order to be successful in his home school!

### New Chrome Books



In St. Elmo, Mrs. Rich's class got new chrome books that are used in her class. One student quoted, "It is nice to have a device that works and helps us with our online learning". The students and staff greatly appreciate the new equipment and are making good use of it.

### Going Above and Beyond



Ramsey School Administration and Staff are going above and beyond to provide remote learners with the supports they need to be successful. This is evidenced by the many home visits being made to help get internet set up for families, the positive feedback being provided from remote learning families, the many technology trainings and workshops being offered in district and the constant communication taking place between school personnel and families.