Music With a Message: 
Rapper Educates Through Music on Autism and Disabilities

Rapper C-Quig is changing the way listeners view autism and disabilities.

The popular musician has been interested in music for as long as he can remember. C-Quig is Charles Quigless, a senior at Clayton High School in The School District of Clayton where he receives services from SSD.

His music reflects his experiences and views with having been diagnosed with autism, in addition to social issues that are affecting students today. He said he hopes his music inspires others to understand that differences make the world a better place.

“Charlie knows he has a disability, and he accepts it and strives to let other people know about his disability,” said Adrian Kuehn, SSD teacher at Clayton High School. “He wants people to know that even though he may have difficulties, he wants them to accept him. And the way he does that is through his music.”

Charlie said he puts messages in his songs. “I want kids who have a disability like me to realize it shouldn’t stop you from doing what you want to do.”

Kuehn said when Quigless came to Clayton High School, he had paraprofessional support in almost all of his core classes, and in some elective classes. “Through the years, we’ve really been good about pulling back that support so that he is now college bound,” Kuehn said.

Charlie plans to study music and is looking at a number of different colleges. In addition to having a large following on social media and YouTube, C-Quig has performed live at a number of events. He won first place for his performance at “An Evening of Entertainment: A Spotlight of Abilities,” an event held last April in Maryland Heights.

“I performed an original song at that event, and everybody was so impressed with it,” Charlie said. “It was really fun getting to perform in front of people who are different and have a disability. I had a lot of people come up to me and tell me how they were inspired by my performance.”

Charlie said he has learned a lot about his disability through the years. “When I was younger, I would feel down because people would think I was different because of my autism. But my dad told me that everybody has a story. It doesn’t matter what you do in life or how far you go, you should tell that story. You have the power to let your story be told.

“To every kid out there who has a disability, and who feels different, and who may feel like they don’t belong — you do belong. Everybody does. Let your story be heard. You belong in this world. And I’m there to support you all every step of the way.”

If you’d like to follow C-Quig on Twitter, Snapchat or Instagram, his handle is @c_quigrapstar.

Visit vimeo.com/ssdstlco/quigless to watch a video about Quigless.
When parents and guardians get involved at school, students and staff reap the benefits.

A parent-teacher organization (PTO) provides the opportunity to work together to supplement and enrich the educational experience for students, staff and community. Many PTOs can be a great ally and help with fundraising and planning events.

Marnie Parr, a parent and PTO member at SSD’s Neuwoehner High School, said the PTO provides activities to enhance the students’ experience, and assists with funding for student activities, such as the fall dance, Family Fun Night, field day lunch, and the annual off-site, all-school prom.

“Prom is an exciting event where students, chaperones and family members are invited to a themed evening of red-carpet fun,” said Parr. “They enjoy dining, dancing, photos and prom court.”

PTO members at SSD’s Southview School provide support for the Family Engagement Committee, art show, talent show, and winter program, as well as incentives for students during testing windows.

“At the end of the school year, we provide support for Southview’s annual prom, and we host an end-of-year celebration for the students,” said Kristen Schaffer, a teacher at Southview. She’s been involved in PTO for nine years. “Last year’s celebration included a day at Grant’s Farm and a glow dance in the gym. The glow dance was a huge hit with both the students and staff.”

While supporting student needs and activities is a predominant goal, PTOs also support staff.

The Neuwoehner PTO provides funding for projects that enhance the classroom experience. “Last spring, we provided financial assistance toward the addition of an outdoor bench made entirely from plastic bottle caps, which the Neuwoehner community had collected,” said Parr. “A teacher personally delivered the enormous quantity of caps to a facility in Indiana where they were transformed into a memorable garden bench for our outdoor area.”

The Southview PTO also recognizes staff. “Each quarter, we plan a little something like providing bagels for breakfast or a snack and soda,” Schaffer said. “It’s something small, but it’s a reminder to staff that their hard work does not go unnoticed. We also make sure to include the bus drivers and aides in whatever we do.”

In addition, the Southview PTO began offering individual grants this year to teachers and support staff for classroom items. They currently give away one grant per quarter.

Community involvement can also be a focus for some PTOs. “We host community-building events, such as our annual pasta dinner and breakfast with Santa,” said Schaffer. “We also host a trivia night every year. Our trivia night is very well attended and is our biggest fundraiser of the year.”

At SSD’s Northview High School, the PTO discusses ways to involve and engage families.

“We try to have a guest speaker at every meeting that can inform families of services available in the community to families and individuals with disabilities,” said Northview principal Brian O’Connor.

Speakers have discussed special needs trusts, guardianships, recreation services, post-secondary transition, and other services for students and their families.

Participation in a PTO offers another distinct advantage.

“Collaboration allows an opportunity for us to personally support and encourage one another,” said Parr. “We are all parents and advocates for our high school students as they journey through their years of growth and independence.”
35-Year Partnership Between SEF and SSD

Have you ever wondered how Special Education Foundation (SEF) got its start? Joan Kaltenbach was a vice president of SSD’s Board of Education and an instructor at University of Missouri-St. Louis. UMSL had a foundation, and Kaltenbach thought SSD would benefit from one as well. She approached SSD Superintendent Sam Scarnato with the idea. He appointed Director of Instructional Resources Betty Walls to develop a committee to investigate the establishment of a foundation, leading to the creation of SEF, the first public school foundation in the state of Missouri on March 30, 1984.

The founding members and first board of directors were: Morris Atkinson, Loren Conrad, William Hildebrandt, Leona Macklemore, Mark Zellmer, Jerry Ponder, Scarnato and Kaltenbach.

The Foundation held a fashion show at the Sheraton Westport in August 1985. More than 175 attended, and the event generated $3,000. This was the first of several fundraisers that allowed the group to provide scholarships and summer camps to students with disabilities. In 1997, the Foundation reorganized and expanded its board of directors to include a more community-oriented membership. In 2003, the Foundation hired its first employee, former Executive Director Diane Buhr Engelsmann. The breadth of SEF’s programs increased dramatically over the next years to add teacher mini-grants, specialized equipment, and arts, leadership and critical needs programs. Current Executive Director David M. Diener continues to lead SEF in its mission to provide services to students with disabilities beyond those provided by tax dollars.

SEF works with SSD and 22 partner districts to help students achieve success beyond the classroom, with a focus on student achievement and creating an environment in which students of all abilities can succeed. See the results in SEF’s anniversary booklet at www.sef-stl.org/booklet

Filing Open Dec. 17–Jan. 21 for Three Seats on SSD Board of Education

Candidates who wish to apply for open seats on the Special School District Board of Education may pick up an information packet and application form beginning Dec. 17 at the SSD Central Administrative Offices, 12110 Clayton Road in Town and Country.

Applications will be distributed to interested candidates during regular business hours beginning at 8 a.m. Dec. 17 through 3 p.m. on Dec. 20 when District offices close for winter break. The next opportunity for candidates to pick up applications will be during regular business hours when District offices reopen after winter break on Jan. 2.

In addition, District offices will be closed on Monday, Jan. 20, for Martin Luther King’s birthday. Filing of applications closes at 5 p.m. on Jan. 21. Filing will not occur in the event that the District’s offices are closed due to inclement weather.

There are three seats up for election. All are for three-year terms.

- **SUBDISTRICT 1** – Hazelwood and Jennings school districts
- **SUBDISTRICT 2** – Affton, Bayless, Hancock Place and Mehlville school districts
- **SUBDISTRICT 7** – Ladue and Rockwood school districts

Board terms begin in March 2020.

Applicants must be citizens of the United States, must have resided in Missouri for at least one year, be at least 24 years old, be a registered voter of the District, and be a resident of the subdistrict in which the application is filed.

With the passage of Proposition S in 1998, SSD Board of Education members are elected by the District’s Governing Council. The Governing Council is comprised of one Board of Education member from each of the 22 school districts in St. Louis County.

Under Governing Council regulations, information packets and applications must be picked up and returned to the SSD administrative offices by the candidate. Packets and forms will not be mailed. Those returning completed applications must show proof of identification.

For more information, call the Superintendent’s Office at 314.989.8419.

A Big Thanks for Your Support

SEF’s Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament was held on Oct. 14. Thanks to all the teachers, staff and parents who volunteered and supported the event. It raised more than $300,000, which the Foundation will put to work supporting kids with disabilities.

Application Deadlines

- Dana Brown Teacher Mini-Grant applications for the 2020-2021 school year are due Dec. 19.
- John Cary Scholarship applications and teacher input are due Jan. 17.
- Fred Saigh Leadership Program nominations and applications are due Jan. 28.

Visit sef-stl.org/programs to see criteria and apply.
Scholarship Deadlines Approaching

With the school year nearing the halfway point, many students and families are preparing for the spring and beyond, including plans for post-secondary education. SSD and several community partners provide scholarship opportunities. Any senior receiving SSD services or attending an SSD technical high school is eligible to apply for these scholarships. Visit bit.ly/ssd_scholarships for details and applications.

**James E. Westbury Memorial Board of Education Scholarships**

**DEADLINE IS JAN. 17, 2020**

The SSD Board of Education is committed to helping all SSD students achieve success. This scholarship is to recognize those who have demonstrated both the ability to work for and achieve a worthy goal and have the desire to achieve more.

**Allison M. Haake Memorial Scholarship**

**DEADLINE IS JAN. 17, 2020**

Established in 2008, this scholarship was created to honor an aspiring teacher who lost her battle with cancer in 2007. The scholarship is awarded to a deserving student who has an interest in working with children.

Each year they raise money to help multiple students offset the costs of their post-secondary education.

**Bonhomme Lions Scholarships**

**DEADLINE IS JAN. 17, 2020**

The Bonhomme Lions have partnered with SSD for many years to offer scholarships to graduating seniors.