



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *A Smooth Start to the New School Year*

Saint Catherine Academy students and staff were excited to see each other again and get the new academic year rolling, settling into familiar routines and adjusting to new ones. Almost two weeks later we've already had our first fire drill—receiving a thumbs-up from the Fairfield Fire Department—and played our first kickball game, evoking big smiles and high-fives at every base.

Like new shoots in a garden, there are already signs of individual growth in every class—such as advancing to double-digit addition, starting a new reader, or to learning a new word in sign language. Some students have taken on new roles as leaders in their class, welcoming others and helping when they can. “They are becoming good friends to each other,” said Mrs. LaPorta.

Often the most enjoyable moments of the day are in the smallest activities, done together—singing attendance in Mrs. LaPorta's class; picking out lockers in Sr. Cheryl's; going to the grocery store for supplies with Mrs. Mitchell's class; and enjoying a new reading corner with Mrs. McMahon. Mr. Matt is back with music class on Wednesdays, and students have been busy decorating project folders with our new Art teacher, Megan Collins.

“It's been a smooth start,” noted Eric Spencer, our new principal, who has been getting to know everyone, greeting students in the morning, sitting in on classes, and meeting parents in the afternoons as they come to pick up their children. “In the short time I've been here, I've witnessed not only structured learning in the classroom, but daily acts of care and kindness. It's obvious to me that students feel emotionally safe and nurtured by the



staff. This is what makes Saint Catherine Academy such a special place.”



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## *A Little More Progress Each Year*

Since Heriberto first came to Saint Catherine Academy five years ago, he's made steady progress in academics each year. Just as important, he's learned how to listen and communicate better, thinking before he speaks, and focus for longer periods of time. "Heriberto has really taken on a leadership role in the classroom," said his teacher, Mrs. Mitchell. "He's been helping out the other students, making them feel comfortable. We're very proud of him."



Heriberto shared his thoughts about being back at school: *I like both math and reading. We're reading Kon-Tiki right now—we're in Chapter 5. I also like Art. We're decorating folders for our projects... For me, this year feels way better than last year. I come ready to finish my work. Two years after this one I'll be graduating. It's my dream to go to college and be an auto mechanic. My dad has taught me a lot, and Mrs. Jacobacci [vocational coordinator] is getting me a volunteer position at Valvoline.*

We think it will be a great year for Heriberto.

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## *New Partnership with Sacred Heart University's MBA Program*

For over a year now, Saint Catherine Center has been exploring the idea of creating a bakery. Called **Four Hearts Bakery** (referring to the Center's logo),

the social enterprise could provide meaningful work opportunities for our young adults and students and address an ongoing goal of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Every successful social enterprise requires a solid business plan, addressing feasibility, marketing, and implementation. With that in mind, we have opened conversation with Sacred Heart University (SHU), whose MBA students can gain valuable real-world experience in creating such a plan for organizations like ours through SHU's Center for Not-for-Profit Organizations.

Helen Burland, Executive Director, and Laura Grozier, Assistant Director of Operations, recently presented an overview of the Center's activities and goals to a class of graduate students in the program. Following that presentation, the class will meet with their professor and decide who will work on Saint Catherine's project.

"We believe that most of our participants could assist in some aspect of a bakery business—from prep, to baking and packaging," Helen said. "We look forward to some practical advice from the students at Sacred Heart in order to implement this initiative."



## Four Hearts Bakery

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*Saint Catherine Academy  
Saint Catherine Adult Day Program*

