

May 2020



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *Is "Zoom" a Noun or a Verb?*

Both the Academy and Adult Program have always made use of Assistive Technology (AT) for learning, reinforcing skills, and practicing learned content. These days, however, AT has become the gateway to classroom instruction, sharing a favorite book, experiencing music together, or just checking in. "Physical presence is especially important with our population," noted Helen Burland, Executive Director. "It's hard to compensate for that online. That said, our staff has done a great job acclimating to the world of Zoom."

Within days after the Center was closed, teachers and direct service providers were reaching out to individual students and adults, checking in to see how they were doing. By mid-April, "Zoom Academy" had started, a daily meeting of all Academy staff and students which follows a familiar routine of meet-and-greet and an opening prayer, roll call, the Pledge of Allegiance, identifying the day-of-the-week, and a story read by Mr. Spencer, Director of Education. The students have adapted remarkably well to the new mode, and are happy to see their friends, albeit onscreen. Teachers are now holding smaller Zoom classes in addition to regular individual check-ins.

Similarly, group meetings twice daily on Zoom give Adult Program participants multiple opportunities to see each other and engage in a familiar routine. The meetings are developing their own "personality" as different staff facilitate, but all include the Day-of-the-Week and current weather, a joke-of-the-day from Patrick R, and listening to stories and short songs chosen by participants. **Strong relationships with students and adult participants and their families have been the hallmark of both programs and have provided the framework to support this shift to successful remote learning.**

Music each week with Mr. Matt from



RhythmHearts Creative Therapies is well-attended, with participants devising percussion instruments from the kitchen or home office, such as saucepans with spoons and paperclip holders. Mirroring the weekly in-person class provides a connection to familiar routines such as the “Hello song” that welcomes each attendee by name.



Recently, Zoom Zingo was added to the adult schedule on Thursday nights. Game cards were mailed to families’ homes. “They love Zingo—no doubt about it—and we’ve adapted to make it work online,” said Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program. “Tyler keeps asking his grandmother, ‘When is Zingo?’ He can’t wait to see all of his friends.”



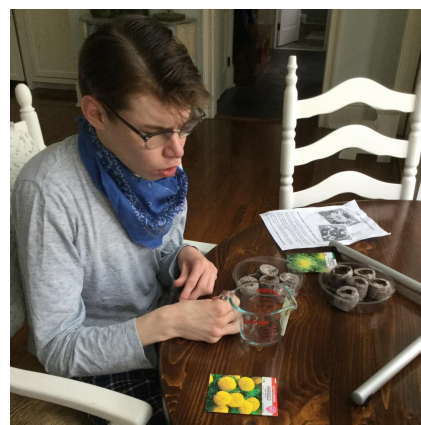
“We’re making it work and we will continue to be creative,” said Helen. “Our programs continue to be focused on the importance of a supportive, engaging community. I’m so proud of all our families and our staff for the way they’ve come together.”

View a video [“Together While We Are Apart”](#) of our students, adults, and staff doing ordinary things at home.



## *Spring Has Sprung!*

Now that spring is really here, it’s time to start planting! Staff have taken some creative initiatives to help students and adults start a home garden. Jake and Jaelyn from the Adult Program started some flowers with the packets of peat pellets and seeds that were mailed home to everyone.



Mrs. LaPorta recently mailed “seed bomb” kits to all students as a home science activity. The process involves wrapping some seeds in tiny balls of moist, shredded construction paper and letting them dry before planting. Ms. Sonia and her granddaughter also demonstrated “Garden in a Glove,” in which seeds are germinated using moist cotton balls and a plastic glove. Their how-to videos are on our [Resources For Being At Home](#), as well as some fun spring art tutorials, such as painting tulips

with forks or Q-tips.

Ms. Laura and Mrs. Burland took to the gardens this week to prepare the planting beds on site at Saint Catherine Center. Armed with organic mix, herbs and vegetable plants, the gardening duo planted so that when (and if) we return in full, the students and young adults will have an important job—harvesting!

[View some spring photos](#)



## Continuing to Celebrate

Being apart has not changed our desire to celebrate, even if we cannot share cupcakes. Celebrating is something Saint Catherine Center has always done well, whether it be the annual Christmas Pageant, holidays, graduation, or individuals' birthdays.

This month we serenaded Ryan, Jack, and Tyler H from the Adult Program with a rousing "Happy Birthday" during Music class on Zoom. We also took time in Zoom Academy to recognize our teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week. As Philip's sign says, "Teachers Rock."



 Joy and Gratitude 

**Our annual "Joy & Gratitude" Dinner is now scheduled for Sunday, October 11. More details to follow!**

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