

2019-2020



COMPANIONS ON A JOURNEY



OUR MISSION

Rooted in Gospel values that affirm the dignity of every person, **Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs** fosters the educational, spiritual, and social well-being of people with disabilities through direct services at **Saint Catherine Academy** and our **Adult Day Program**, and support for faith formation in the parishes and inclusion in Catholic schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport.



OUR CORE VALUES

- We respect the dignity and diversity of each person.
- We serve people of all races, ethnicities, faiths, and economic backgrounds.
- We focus on the total well-being of each person we serve.
- We create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere, where each person feels a sense of belonging.
- We celebrate the abilities and successes of each person.
- We seek to build interpersonal relationships in a nurturing community.
- We bring hope and joy to our students, clients, families, staff, and community partners.

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Fall 2020

Dear Friends of Saint Catherine Center,

Founded on building community, our mission is to help lift up all, regardless of abilities. This spring, we were challenged and humbled with the realization that our mission couldn't take a day off. Through all of this, however, we are reminded that Saint Catherine Center is a community who cares deeply about one another.

Our families needed our support more than ever. We had to figure out a way to provide that support, even if it was imperfect, in order to continue the journey of learning and companionship. Our journey was taking a different path and we needed to alter our course. We were called to respond, and respond we did!

This past year has taught us innumerable lessons and affirmed that our work at the Center is

meaningful. We have recommitted to the values that guide our decisions: that all of God's children are valued and we have a collective responsibility to journey with the most vulnerable amongst us. We have rededicated ourselves to our mission, reopening gradually and with confidence.

Pope Francis reminds us that "life is a gift we receive only when we give ourselves away, and our deepest joy comes from saying yes to love." Saint Catherine Center is a community of people who have said yes to love, beginning with our families sharing their loved ones with us each day, our staff offering loving service, and our volunteers and donors committing their time and resources. Simply said, "Saying yes to love is what we do."

We are grateful for all the past support that our benefactors have provided, and challenge all of you to continue to partner with us. Together, companions on this journey, we can experience the joy that comes from the journey of life.

With deep gratitude,

Charles 7. Thuisan

Charles F. Chiusano Chair, Board of Directors





Deen & Burland

Helen C. Burland Executive Director

ADULT DAY PROGRAM

THE ACADEMY

In a safe and caring community, Saint Catherine Academy offers an alternative education program for young people with special needs, ages 5 to 21.

In small classes that are organized around students' individual needs and capabilities, our certified special education teachers and assistants guide students toward greater independence. Academic learning is integrated with the development of life skills and vocational experiences. Through art, music, and movement classes, students have opportunities to express themselves and build relationships with their peers. The Academy is approved as a private special education program by the CT State Department of Education.

SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR Special Needs





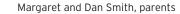
vet when we walked through the door of St.

Catherine Academy we knew we had found the right place. The staff is keenly adept at facilitating learning in a fun and engaging environment and take the time to really know our daughter... while always keeping her happy and safe. Elise is thrilled to see her friends each day. 77 Lorraine and Ted Hilton, parents

Participants develop a sense of community and purpose by engaging in ordinary, everyday activities in the company of others.



66 Owen gets up each morning, excited to be with 'his people' at St. Catherine's. He recognizes that the staff are genuinely fond of him, and that knowledge gives him the self-confidence he needs to expand his world. He looks forward to music, yoga, pizza day, and trips out into the community to do volunteer work. He feels useful and valued and a sense of belonging at St. Catherine's. It is a beautiful thing to witness.??







Interacting and developing relationships in a safe, structured environment is central to our programming in the Adult Day Program. From daily tasks like collecting the mail, to yoga, swimming, and other activities in the community, life and social skills are developed and nurtured. Trained, caring



staff provide individualized attention. support, and encouragement all along the way. The yearround program is approved by the CT Department of Developmental Services.





-PARISH & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

-THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Saint Catherine Center provides support and resources for individuals with disabilities and their families in the Diocese, including preparation for sacraments, strategies for inclusion in parish life, and opportunities for adults in the community to socialize.



The popular dinner dances hosted by the Center several times each year continue to draw more than 100 adults from the community.



Rev. Peter Cipriani of Assumption Church in Fairfield regularly welcomed our students and adults to First Friday and other special Masses.





At our annual Mass to Celebrate People with Special Needs, celebrated by Bishop Caggiano, 12 young people from five parishes received the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation.



Our corps of generous volunteers serve as role models and guides, offering the gift of companionship to our students and adults.



We are so grateful to the Order of Malta, whose members coordinate PB&J Fridays, working alongside students to make sandwiches for Thomas Merton Center. The latest tally: approximately 36,000 sandwiches made since 2008! (Pictured above: Cece Donoghue)



⁶⁶ When a library session goes well, what I feel is a warm and light heart. And when it doesn't go well, I also have a warm and light heart. I'm meant to be there. After many years of rising up to meet the kids wherever they are, I always leave with so much more than I give.??

in 2008, inspiring the love of reading and stories.

Malta volunteers Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama and Jeanie Tisdale (above right) have led the Library Program since it began



Academy students all get a healthy dose of exercise each week with patient encouragement from volunteer Eileen Blees who has directed gym class every Friday morning for the past 12 years.



Members of Knights of Columbus Councils from around the state provide much needed financial support through their "Tootsie Roll" drives and invaluable in-person support on a variety of projects. (Pictured: Council 185 from St. Rose of Lima in Newtown)

Jeanie Tisdale, volunteer, member of the Order of Malta



HIGHLIGHTS 2019-2020





Elise and Ronald celebrated their graduation in an outdoor ceremony and prayer service in June, led by Msgr. Robert Weiss, Board member and pastor at St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown.



Every student has a role in the annual Christmas pageant, always a joyful occasion. More than 200 family members and friends came together for the 2019 production, "A Cousins' Christmas."

Expert dance moves were on display as the Adult Program joined Academy students for lunch and a dance party in celebration of Catholic Schools Week.



Music, art, theater, and yoga sessions each week provide opportunities for self-expression and the building of social skills.





The gym at Saint Catherine Center was transformed by the joyful faces of more than 125 students and their families, faculty, staff, and friends for a Mass in recognition of our 20th Anniversary. Bishop Caggiano celebrated the Mass, assisted by Msgrs. Robert Weiss and William Schevd.





The Knights of Columbus have generously supported Saint Catherine Center since it was founded 20 years ago. Former State Deputy and Council member Steve Bacon (left) and his wife Kathy were among the attendees.

5TH ANNIVERSARY OF ADULT PROGRAM





At the end of the celebration, students and former students joined together to sing our favorite song, "This Little Light of Mine."



For the students and young adults at Saint Catherine Center, to "stay home and be safe" during the coronavirus pandemic meant separation from peers and the disruption of daily routines that are crucial to navigating a complex world.

While acknowledging that online learning is not a substitute for in-person contact, instruction, and support, the Center guickly adapted to a virtual format. A technology lending program was established to provide access for families who needed it. Daily "Zoom Academy" and adult group sessions were initiated online, augmented by individual support from staff to help maintain important skills.

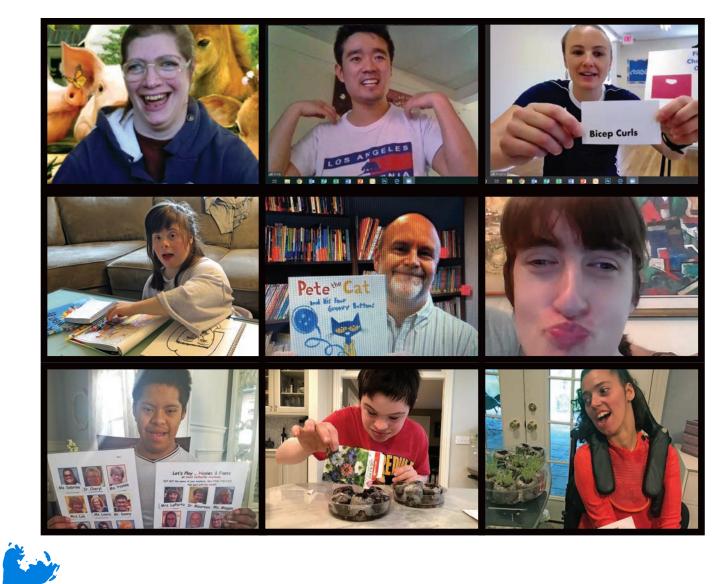
Music and yoga classes were held virtually, with enthusiastic participation. A webpage of resources and activities was created to support families, including stories and songs recorded by volunteers and staff, and simple art and cooking projects.

As we have reopened, we are more grateful than ever for our strong community.

66 Although the pandemic has upended our daughter Jessie's life and routine in countless ways, St. Catherine's provided a daily touchstone with daily, well-organized Zoom meetings. Jessie looked forward to the yoga, music, and Zingo games online each week. The Center is unique among many other adult programs in how quickly these activities were initiated and how the staff is attuned to keeping each participant engaged and involved.

Michelle Rivelli, parent and Board member

While we were apart, families helped keep connections strong by sharing photos of our students and adults doing schoolwork and other ordinary activities from home.







2019-2020 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Expenses

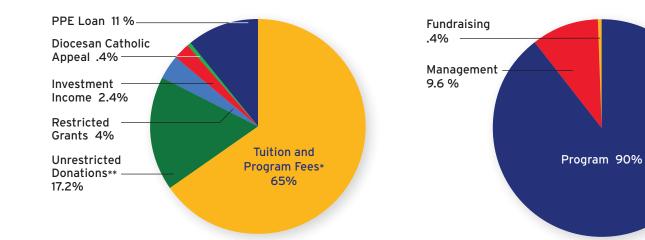
Support and Revenue (rounded to nearest 100)		
Tuition and Program Fees*	\$1,668,419	
Unrestricted Donations**	440,513	
Restricted Grants	95,854	
Investment Income	62,361	
Diocesan Catholic Appeal	11,535	
PPP Loan	276,574	
Total Revenue	\$2,555,256	
*Awarded scholarships	159,800	

1	Total Expenses	\$2,187,417
ŀ	Fundraising	10,000
3	Management	218,741
)	Program	\$1,958,676
	=	

Audited financial statements and IRS 990 report will be available at StCatherineCenter.org by 12/2020.

*Awarded scholarships

**Annual Dinner was not held due to COVID-19 restrictions.



OUR STUDENTS AND ADULT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS come from Bridgeport, Darien, Fairfield, Madison, Milford, Monroe, New Canaan, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Shelton, Stamford, Trumbull, West Haven, Weston, and Westport.



DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Dear Friends of Saint Catherine Center,

When you and I choose to walk with our neighbor, we are fulfilling the Lord's commandment, helping to make "the yoke easy and the burden light" for someone who walks with us. This is what Pope Francis means when he consistently speaks of *accompaniment*.

The ministry of Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs is to accompany the most vulnerable among us and is central to the mission of the Church and our Diocesan community. In my tenure as Bishop, I have watched the Center grow and thrive as they companion children and young adults with disabilities, teaching, challenging, and nurturing them to become as independent as possible. It is a challenging and rewarding enterprise.

I wish to thank all who generously support this mission. You are truly sharing the yoke and making the burden lighter for these special young people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Thank Kaggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano Bishop of Bridgeport

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The Westchester Bank Ms. Eva Wirth



Special events at Ralph Lauren in New Canaan and J. McLaughlin in Darien raised much-needed funds for the Center. Thank you to our hosts! (Pictured L-R: Jov Cronin Laura Grozier, and Elena Schlegel)

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. We apologize for any errors or omissions.





Jack Crowell and his mother Connie passed away in a car accident on July 31. Before joining the Adult Program, Jack was a student in the Academy.

He brought tremendous joy to the Saint Catherine community, always smiling, enthusiastic, and ready for the next adventure. We miss him.





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