



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

The Power of Movement

The benefits of exercise are well-known, including stronger muscles, better coordination, more flexibility, and improved confidence and self-esteem. All students and adult participants at the Center have an individualized exercise and movement routine as part of their daily schedule.

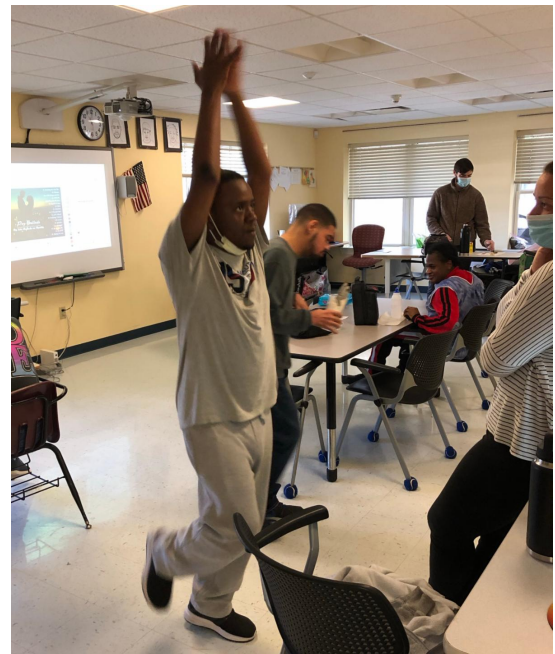
“There has been quite the transformation since Maggie has been using the treadmill,” said Karen McDonald about her daughter, an Academy student. The physical therapist had recommended exercise on the treadmill, but Maggie wasn’t interested. In November, with prompting from the teacher’s assistants, Maggie gave the treadmill a try for five minutes. The next day she did not need prompting to get on the machine. Now, Maggie walks contentedly on the treadmill for 30 minutes each morning.

The regular activity has improved her ability to stay on task in the classroom. Maggie’s confidence, as evident in her now-frequent smile, is the result of feeling energized and all that positive feedback. “The exercise gets her going, which allows her to focus on learning each day,” her mother said. “I love the brightness we see more frequently.”

Exercise helps calm Ronald, a participant in the Adult Program. When he arrives each morning he is often so full of energy that he can’t focus. Sometimes a short session of jumping jacks and wall push-ups helps Ronald recalibrate and focus. “He is much calmer afterward and able to pay attention to the task at hand,” said Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program. Ronald also enjoys the trampoline and the treadmill.

For others with mobility issues, daily assisted stretching on a floor mat or time spent in a prone stander soothes muscles that become cramped and tight from being in a wheelchair.

Group exercise offers the added opportunity to develop social skills, such as waiting turns and



playing as a team. Every Friday for the past 12 years, volunteer Eileen Blees has led a gym session for the Academy. Students choose their warm-up drill, such as hopping, skipping, running or jumping jacks. This is often followed by a game like basketball, where the main goal is not to get a basket but to play together, passing and catching. "It's a privilege for me to be able to help the students celebrate their abilities and successes on their own terms," Eileen said. "My aim is to find physical activity that is enjoyable for all."

Both programs also have the benefit of a weekly movement class led by Angela DeGrassi of ASD Fitness, an organization with expertise in providing fitness instruction for people with special needs. Through a variety of exercises, participants develop body awareness, practice following instructions, and move together as a group. This is offered simultaneously to our virtual learners.

Often the most enjoyable exercise is the most simple—such as a walk at Lake Mohegan, shooting hoops outside, or half an hour with friends in the playground. We're looking forward to spring when we can be outside more often!

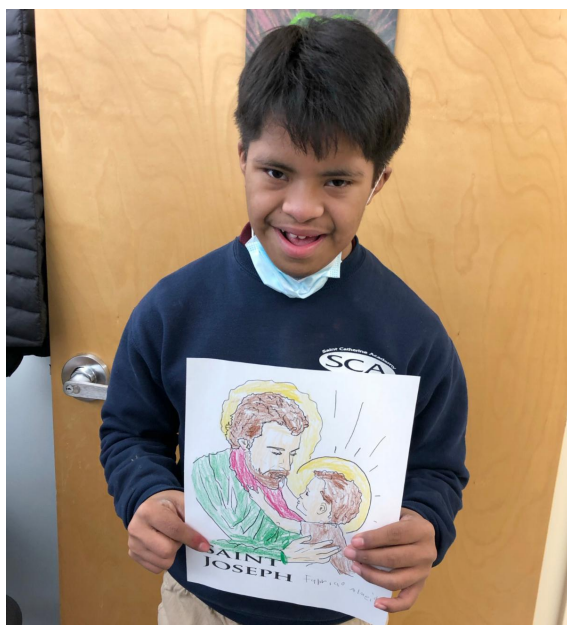
[View the slideshow of our students and adults "on the move"](#)



Marching with Saints

St. Patrick

On St. Patrick's Day, everyone has a bit o' the Irish in them! While the Academy will miss the marching in the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, students and adult participants have already begun celebrating the special day with Zoom sessions on the famous saint and, of course, creative artwork featuring streaming rainbows, leprechauns, and pots of gold. We have heard from a leprechaun or two that Bob



Ross, a parent from the Adult Program, will perform some Irish songs via Zoom for us on the 17th. We are really looking forward to that!

St. Joseph

There is another important saint we celebrate in March. Last December, Pope Francis declared 2021 the “Year of St. Joseph”, on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St. Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church. The Pope described the saint as a “tender and loving father” who is “creatively courageous” and has helped us see more clearly the importance of ordinary people who exercise patience and offer hope every day. “Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence—an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble,” the Pope wrote in [Patris Corde](#).

Fabricio, one of our students, has had a special affinity for St. Joseph ever since he had the role of Joseph in the Center’s 2019 Christmas Pageant. “He’s me!” Fabricio exclaimed. He has obviously chosen a wonderful role model. Saint Catherine Center is a place where we celebrate the importance of ordinary people exercising patience and offering hope every day, just like St. Joseph.

[Enjoy more St. Patrick's Day photos](#)

More Donors Than Ever on Fairfield County's Giving Day

Thank you to the many generous friends of Saint Catherine Center who made Fairfield County Giving Day a success! We raised over \$40,000, with a 27% increase in the number of donors. With your support, participants in our Adult Program will continue to enjoy Cultural Arts in our music, art, and movement programs.



T
H
A
N
K
Y
O
U

Joy and Gratitude

SAVE the DATE

Sunday, October 3, 2021



Mark your calendar and make plans to join us on October 3rd for our annual dinner. More details to follow!

