

October 2021



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

An Atmosphere of Joy & Gratitude at our Annual Dinner

Like a family reunion, the atmosphere at our 2021 “Joy & Gratitude” Dinner on October 3rd was filled with excitement at being together to support Saint Catherine Center. More than 230 friends of the Center attended the event at the McClinch Family Center at Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull. Many had not seen each other in person since the Center’s last dinner in June 2019.

“It was such a treat to be around friends and the Saint Catherine family!” said Kelly Weldon, a Center Board member. “The vibe truly was one of joy and gratitude.” [View photos](#)



Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, offered words of welcome. “The students and young adults at Saint Catherine’s are more than respected,” he said. “They are loved and cared for. This is at the heart of the mission of our Diocese.” His recognition of Helen Burland, the Center’s Executive Director, for her outstanding leadership prompted a standing ovation.

Board Chairman Charles Chiusano then introduced the evening’s honorees. **Elena and Steve Schlegel** of New Canaan received the Leadership Award. “When we announced our expansion plans for the Center, the Schlegels were alongside us, supporting our vision and taking a leadership role in the [Building For the Future](#) Campaign,” Helen said as she announced the award. The kitchen in the new facility will be named after the Schlegel’s daughter Katherine, who passed away in 2018. “When we cut the ribbon on the expansion, we will be proud to show everyone ‘Kat’s Kitchen’—a place where our students and young adults will have an authentic experience planning, preparing, and sharing baked goods from 4-Hearts Bakery.”

Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama of Darien was honored with the Volunteer Service Award for her dedication to the development and



implementation of the Library Program at Saint Catherine Academy. "My library days are full of joy, laughter, and spontaneity, making books that I love come alive, singing songs, and doing lots of movement. Who could ask for more fun than that?" Virginia said as she accepted the award. "Through my 13 years of being involved...I've felt part of the Saint Catherine's community—a place where children are loved and accepted for who they are, by their peers and all the staff, and where they are encouraged to be and do all that they're capable of."

([Read more](#) about the honorees.)

Helen thanked Father Joseph Marcello, Pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish, for the generous use of the facility, as well as the many sponsors and volunteers who made the evening possible, especially the Knights of Columbus, AEA, St. Rose of Lima Parish, and TD Bank. Terry O'Connor's expert auctioneering skills kept the Live Auction rolling, followed by the Call For Charity at the end of the evening, which raised more than \$100,000.

"It was a very successful evening," Helen said. "We are getting closer to our \$5M goal for the campaign, thanks to the incredible generosity and support of the Saint Catherine community. We are so grateful."

[View photos](#)

[View the presentation video](#) (4 min)



Photos, from top:

Bishop Caggiano (center) congratulated honorees Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama and Elena and Steve Schlegel.

Lori Leskin (R) headed up the Dinner Committee to create fabulous Live and Silent Auctions. (Pictured with committee member Lori Mercede)

Msgr. Robert Weiss, Pastor of St. Rose of Lima in Newtown and Center Board member, gathered members of his parish for a photo.

Guests viewed floorplans for the expanded facility. ([Visit the website](#) for more information about the expansion.)

Mass for Special Needs on November 7

Join Us



Several young people will receive the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation at the annual Mass Celebrating People with Special Needs, hosted by Saint Catherine Center. This Mass is part of the Center's mission to provide community outreach and support for parishes and families of children with disabilities, who often find themselves isolated when trying to find support for their children's faith formation.

"Parents of young people with disabilities have to work hard to meet the needs of their children," said Helen Burland, Executive Director. "We are privileged to be able to help families find ways to feel more included in the life of their parish." [Resources for families and catechists](#) are available on our website.

The public is welcome to attend the Mass, but space is limited; reservations must be made in advance by calling 203-540-5381.

Mass Celebrating People with Special Needs

Sunday, November 7
2 p.m.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano,
Principal Celebrant

Holy Cross Church
750 Tahmore Drive
Fairfield

*Adjacent to Saint Catherine
Center*

RSVP to 203-540-5831

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