



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *Breaking Ground!*



The shovels are ready for the groundbreaking ceremony on our expansion project at Saint Catherine Center this week. “It has been a long process,” said Helen Burland, Executive Director. “But the paperwork and permits are complete and we are excited to begin construction.”

Bishop Frank Caggiano will attend and bless the new site. Also attending will be representatives from the architectural firm Antinozzi and Associates, and the builders, Tomlinson Hawley Patterson (THP). The new addition will

double the size of the Center, creating much-needed space for a new commercial-grade kitchen and hydroponic garden, as well as additional office and storage space. “This expansion is the most important initiative to happen at the Center since we opened our doors,” said Helen.

[Check the website for photos and construction updates!](#)

## *At The Core: Creating a Supportive and Welcoming Atmosphere*

*When Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs was formed in 2014, the Board of Directors and staff came together to create a set of [Core Values](#) to describe what is important to us and to guide us in our work with young people with disabilities. We continue to share stories from the Saint Catherine community that show our Core Values in action.*

**Core Value 4: We create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere, where each person feels a sense of belonging.**

At Saint Catherine Center, a welcoming atmosphere is created every day in small ways, from friendly greetings to acts of kindness. This is how everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Our students and adults are happy to arrive each morning. Emily has her own exuberant

way of entering the building, usually with arms wide open and a loud “Hi!” to whoever is at the door. Other participants, like Nick, have a quieter approach, with a soft hello to each person in his room. The effect is the same: *I’m glad to see you. You and I belong.*

The sense of belonging extends to staff. When Drew Mosquea recently joined the Adult Program staff, Ryan befriended him and now the two have a special bond.

Acts of kindness validates the sense of belonging. Each morning, Francisco brings Sami and Jake’s backpacks in and puts them in their lockers. Fabricio is always thinking of his classmates, quick to retrieve their folders and help them in small ways.

Our volunteers feel welcomed, too. “I am honored and humbled when I come in to Saint Catherine’s each month to make sandwiches for PB&J Fridays,” says Christine Woods (right), a volunteer since 2018. “In a very simple way, what we’re doing together on PB&J days is helping people who are less fortunate. There’s a joyful atmosphere that is unique to Saint Catherine’s—and it’s contagious. I just always feel comfortable and welcome and leave there excited about the day ahead!”

*Next month: We celebrate the abilities and successes of each person.*



## *Sip 'n Speech: The Art of Conversation*

It begins with a cup of coffee.

Anna reads the label on the jar of coffee to see how many ounces of water are needed to make three cups of coffee—one for Keona, one for Ms. Meghan, and one for herself. It takes a few attempts to get the measurement right. Then she programs the microwave for one minute. Together they scoop out the



coffee, pour the hot water, and add cream and sugar.

Then it's time to chat.

"There are so many skills required to engage in conversation—listening and waiting, framing a response so that it is understood, and generating follow-up questions," said Meghan Weinberger, a Speech & Language therapist at Saint Catherine Academy. She initiated "Sip 'n Speech" as a relaxed way to help students engage in conversations they might have in common situations. "The action of following a sequence, like making the coffee, provides both motivation and an opportunity for the students to interact," Meghan said.

With a natural, friendly tone, Meghan gets the conversation going: "If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?" Anna likes Hawaii. Keona thinks maybe Canada would be nice. Meghan generates her prompts from themes in class, or social situations that she knows may be coming up for the students, such as holidays or family gatherings. As they converse, she helps Anna and Keona learn to ask follow-up questions and stay on topic. One of her goals is to "move past the 'how' and more toward the 'why'" with her questions.

"Why would you like to live in Hawaii, Anna?" After a few moments of consideration Anna answers, "It's nice and warm there, of course!"

Gradually Anna and Keona are getting to know each other better. Like any skill, it takes practice.





Join Us



# Christmas Pageant

**Friday, December 23, 10 a.m.**

*Featuring students from Saint Catherine Academy*

Saint Catherine Center  
760 Tahmore Drive | Fairfield

**Reservations recommended: 203-540-5381**

*Due to the construction project, parking will be limited.  
Parking at Lake Mohegan is recommended.*

## ***Shop at Ralph Lauren in New Canaan this Friday***

**"Sip & Shop"**  
**Friday, December 16**  
**5 pm – 7 pm**

**15% of in-person or call-in sales  
all day  
will benefit Saint Catherine Center!**

### RALPH LAUREN

PLEASE JOIN US FOR  
CHARITABLE SHOPPING IN SUPPORT OF

ST. CATHERINE CENTER  
FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16  
5 PM – 7 PM

RALPH LAUREN  
51 ELM STREET  
NEW CANAAN

TO SHOP REMOTELY OR SCHEDULE A PRIVATE APPOINTMENT, KINDLY CONTACT  
NICHOLAS.THIR@RALPHLAUREN.COM

FIFTEEN PERCENT OF FULL-PRICE, PRE-TAXED PURCHASES MADE BY CUSTOMERS SHOPPING  
ON BEHALF OF THE ST. CATHERINE CENTER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS WILL BE DONATED TO THEIR  
MISSION TO "FOSTER THE EDUCATIONAL, SPIRITUAL, AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH DIRECT SERVICES AT SAINT CATHERINE ACADEMY AND (THEIR)  
ADULT SERVICES PROGRAM, AND SUPPORT FOR FAITH FORMATION AND INCLUSION IN THE  
PARISHES AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT."



## Consider A Unique Holiday Gift

There is still time to make a year-end gift!  
In this season of giving, recognize someone special  
with a contribution to Saint Catherine Center  
in their honor or memory.

***Click to give***



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