

June 2024



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

Celebrating Service



On May 16th, Saint Catherine Center hosted a luncheon to celebrate and honor our dedicated volunteers. We are so grateful for the unwavering support and commitment our volunteers show toward our mission. Whether in the classrooms, vocational sites, garden and grounds, making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or helping on our gala committee and various events throughout the year, their contributions are deeply appreciated.



Our volunteers' efforts are crucial to our mission, and their dedication sets a powerful example for our students and young adults. This year's theme for volunteer appreciation was "celebrate service," and we aimed to ensure every volunteer felt celebrated and valued for their commitment.



In attendance were board members, vocational coaches, gala committee members, PB&J volunteers, and special event hostesses. The event was a joyous celebration allowing us to give back to those who continually give their time and service.



The event began with welcoming remarks from Mr. Eric Spencer, Academy principal, who thanked everyone for joining this celebration. He shared heartfelt words on behalf of Laura Grozier, who wanted to express her deepest appreciation for each person's contributions.

Following the remarks, the volunteers enjoyed a delicious lunch, sitting alongside our students. This opportunity allowed our volunteers to engage with our students and connect with the community.

It was a wonderful moment with mutual appreciation and shined a light on the significance of our volunteers' service. Thank you to all our volunteers who couldn't attend for your service and dedication. Your contributions make a significant difference in the lives of those we serve at Saint Catherine Center.

Together We Grow

Community Contributions Enrich our Garden

With the arrival of sunny days our students and young adults are ready for a season of growth and learning at our outdoor garden. Thanks to the generous support from Foundations in Education, we have been able to enhance our gardening experiences with additional raised garden beds. Foundations in Education supports Catholic Schools within the Diocese of Bridgeport to promote educational advancements and provide opportunities for students to learn and thrive. These raised structures make it easier for individuals with a wide range of ambulatory abilities to participate in gardening activities. This initiative is a testament to the collaborative efforts within our community to support and enhance the educational journey of our students, providing them with resources to support and enable their success, growth, and development.

Preparations for the growing season began in April as students and young adults planted seeds in pots to germinate indoors until they were ready to be transplanted into the outdoor garden beds. With careful attention and care, students and adults have been monitoring the progress of the plantings to ensure they are being watered and flourishing. Each year, we use our garden as a tool for educational instruction for our students and young adults. It teaches them about problem solving, planning, critical thinking, decision making, responsibility, creativity, communicating effectively, and working in a team.

From seed to harvest, each step of the way represents a learning lesson. Gardening provides an immersive learning experience where students can engage directly with the natural world. Through activities such as planting, watering, and weeding, students develop important life skills. They also foster a sense of accomplishment and independence. Beyond the practical benefits of growing our own produce, the garden also serves as a therapeutic space, creating a connection to nature and promoting well-being. "Our garden is more than just a place for plants to grow—it's a place where our students and young adults grow too," says Mr. Jim, Academy teacher.

At the end of May, we welcomed back volunteers from Morgan Stanley who generously dedicated their time to assist in outdoor spring cleaning and gardening preparation at the Center. They helped us in weeding and landscaping around the garden area, setting the stage for a successful planting season. "Many of the volunteers are 'repeat' gardeners and have established friendships with our students and young adults," says Laura Grozier, Executive Director. "We are so grateful for their time and effort; it is a huge help to us."

With the groundwork laid and seeds planted, we are eagerly looking forward to the coming months. As our garden beds begin to flourish, we anticipate a bountiful harvest that will not only provide fresh produce but also enrich the lives of our community.





Egg-tra Care Makes a Difference



Each year, Saint Catherine Academy transforms a classroom into a mini-hatchery, bringing the wonders of life cycles directly into the lives of our students. In partnership with Rent the Chicken, this month-long, hands-on science project provides students with the unique opportunity to observe and care for eggs from incubation to hatching in an interactive and engaging learning experience.

At the beginning of the project, Rent the Chicken delivers several eggs along with an incubator and all the necessary equipment needed to hatch and nurture the chicks in the classroom. The students embark on this educational journey, learning about the life cycle of a chicken, the intricacies of incubation, and the essential aspects of chick care.



Throughout the month, students monitor the eggs' progress, eagerly awaiting the first signs of hatching. They check on the eggs daily. Excitement reached its peak when the first cracks appeared, signaling the arrival of the chicks. The students watched as the tiny, fragile creatures emerged from their shells.

The project presented a real-life lesson in compassion and perseverance when one of the chicks hatched with a condition known as Wry Neck. This condition causes the chick's head and neck to twist and tilt unnaturally, making it difficult for the chick to eat, drink, and walk. Witnessing this struggle, the students learned the importance of empathy and problem-solving.



Ms. Sabrina, one of our dedicated Academy staff, and Sr. Marilyn, an Academy teacher, took the chick under their wing—quite literally. They placed the chick in a small box, feeding it with a syringe and ensuring it received the care it needed. Ms. Sabrina continued her nurturing and took the chick home overnight, demonstrating the profound impact of dedication and love. After a few days of attentive care, the chick showed remarkable improvement. It regained mobility and began feeding itself, a testament to the power of extra care and support. This experience left a lasting impression on the students, teaching them that sometimes, a little extra love and effort can make a significant difference. “Everyone has the potential to grow, whether they are our students



or our chicks; sometimes all it takes it a bit of extra TLC,” says Ms. Sabrina.

The students had not only witnessed the miracle of life from eggs to chicks but had also learned valuable lessons in responsibility, empathy, and the importance of perseverance. The joy and pride everyone felt was contagious as they watched their chicks healthy and thriving. Saint Catherine Academy’s annual hands-on science project, in partnership with Rent the Chicken, continues to be a highlight of our academic year. It brings science to life, fostering a deep connection between students and nature, and creating memories that will last a lifetime.



Before:

After:

Chick with Wry Neck

Chick without Wry Neck

Mark Your Calendar

SAVE THE DATE

Saint Catherine Academy

25TH

Anniversary Mass

Sunday, September 22, 2024

2 PM

HOLY CROSS CHURCH
760 Tahmore Drive
Fairfield, CT 06825

SAVE THE DATE

Joy & Gratitude

ANNUAL GALA

OCTOBER

SUNDAY 6 2024

SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

McClinch Family Center
St. Catherine of Siena Parish
Trumbull, CT



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