



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR
Special Needs

2020-2021



A NURTURING COMMUNITY



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 Services Program**, and support for faith formation and inclusion in the parishes and 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, adult participants, families, staff, and community partners.

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IN MEMORY OF DR. JUAN LOPEZ

Dr. Juan Lopez, a member of the Board of Directors since 2018, passed away in July. He was a passionate advocate for education equity and our mission. We honor his memory.

On the cover,

Top: 1. Mrs. LaPorta and Luke planted a seedling in the backyard garden. 2. Anna enjoyed the mentoring of Kaylee, a Notre Dame High School student who interned at the Academy during the summer. Bottom: 3. Sami and Ms. Brady shared a moment in the library. 4. "I got this!" Tyler read to Mr. Jud and his friends in the Adult Program for the first time.



Fall 2021

Dear Friends of Saint Catherine Center,

What is community? These days the word is used in many ways but at Saint Catherine Center its meaning is at the heart of what we do. As a group of people who care about each other, share a common purpose, and work together to create a learning environment infused with compassion and sense of belonging, we truly are a community.

This past year, it was the power of community that supported us and propelled us forward, seen each day in the joy we saw in the students and young adults we serve. This joy is evident in the pages of this report.

We showed great resilience as we reopened in summer 2020 after months of separation. However, the year was not without its challenges. We managed health concerns; we mourned the loss of one our own; we virtually supported those who were unable to return in person. We missed the energy and talents of our volunteers. Limited to onsite programming, we missed our activities and experiences in the community.

We discovered untapped artistic creativity; we explored new ways to use technology; we celebrated simple joys in weekly prayer service, Zingo games, and enthusiastic recesses. Reading with adult participants became a daily activity and exercise on the treadmill, bike, or power walking added social and recreational opportunities for everyone.

As we look ahead with our *Building For the Future* Campaign, we remain grateful to you – our community of supporters, our families, our donors, and our staff. Collectively, you lifted us up and carried us through the year. As we move forward, we hold you in our hearts and look ahead with faith that we are stronger today because of the power of the Saint Catherine Center community.

With gratitude,



Charles F. Chiusano
Chair, Board of Directors



Helen C. Burland
Executive Director





OUR COMMUNITY SHARES A COMMON PURPOSE

At the center of our community are trusting relationships. Growing as learners and celebrating their abilities, students and adults learn to rely on each other, share their experiences, and enjoy the satisfaction of serving others. All feel a sense of belonging and acceptance for who they are.

We recognize that the most vulnerable among us often have much to teach us about the importance of caring for others. Our common purpose is grounded in faith and the belief that each life has value that is evident in the ordinary tasks of the day.

Each day, we discover that our community is bigger than any one individual, with a common purpose to help and serve one another. Together we are able to accomplish much more than we can on our own.



Jaclyn harvested some of the tomatoes from the garden. Both programs started seeds inside and transplanted them.



The tradition continues: Academy students made sandwiches for Merton House on PB&J Fridays each month, with a role for everyone. The Adult Program continued making sandwiches through the summer.



"The Two Patricks" share a joke while collecting the mail together.





Five teens from local high schools assisted in classrooms this summer, providing mentoring and companionship to Academy students.

Adults worked together to assemble items for an event for the Yale Eye Center.

About Saint Catherine Center

Founded in 1999, **Saint Catherine Academy** is a state-approved special education program for students ages 5 to 22 who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism. Small classes focus on academics, the development of life skills, and vocational experiences. The **Adult Services Program**, recognized by the CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS), was opened in 2015 for adults ages 21 and above. Life and independent living skills are reinforced and integrated with activities in the community.

The Center also provides **Parish & Community Support** for faith formation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local parishes and schools, as well as social outreach in the community.

Students and adult participants come from Bridgeport, Darien, Fairfield, Madison, Milford, Monroe, New Canaan, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Shelton, Stamford, Trumbull, West Haven, Weston, Westport, and Rye, NY.

“ If we can help to bring out the goodness in each student, and then they offer it to others – that’s what it’s all about. It’s a beautiful thing to see. ”

Sr. Cheryl Driscoll, RSM, teacher



OUR COMMUNITY FOSTERS LEARNING

Respecting that each person learns differently, our staff meet each individual where they are, nurturing their skills, and challenging them toward the next step. Learning is intentional and integrated. Independence and confidence grow in this supportive environment.

As their language skills grow, participants can share who they are with each other. Math paves a way to functional life skills, such as making change and planning a meal. Reading opens the imagination and gives individuals a venue to share skills with peers. Art, music, and movement sessions each week unlock self-expression.

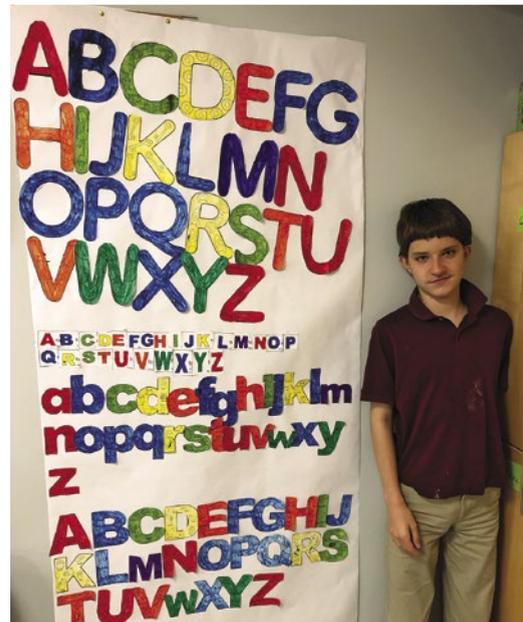
All along the way, our intention is not to “do for” but to “do with” – to be companions on a journey.



Devon and Ms. Jeanne worked together on an art project.

Connor's passion for the alphabet led to the creation of an "Alphabet Wall" to help him improve his reading comprehension in all subjects.

Vinny practiced word recognition with his teacher, Mr. Jim, who joined the Academy staff this year.





Frank practices social skills, such as greeting, with Kebbi the robot (funded by a grant from Foundations in Education).

“ As parents, we’re encouraged not to think about what our son can’t do, but what he *can*. At the Center, they live this philosophy every day. We were so thankful to find Saint Catherine’s. It’s a place that is true to its mission of respecting the dignity of each individual.”

Tom and Vicky Reynolds, parents

Nyah used her AAC device (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) to work on language skills with Ms. Cindy. Assistive technology provides a way for non-verbal students to find a voice.

Gus loves to read using the Edmark Program so much that it is an incentive for completing his tasks.





OUR COMMUNITY CELEBRATES ABILITIES



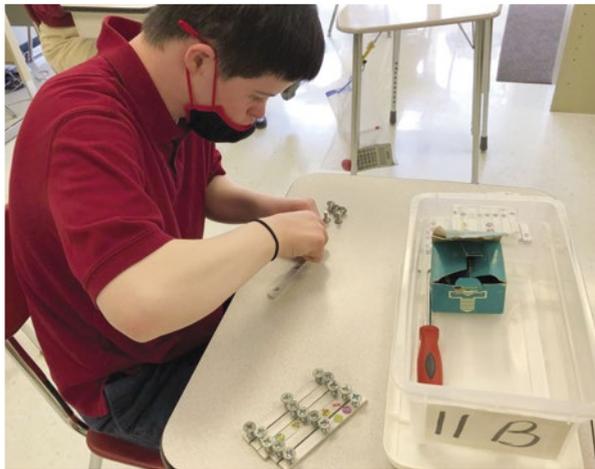
Ellie proudly assumed the role of master bread sorter on Fridays when the Adult Program sorts and wraps bread and pastries from Panera Bread to deliver to Merton House.

The two most frequently heard words at Saint Catherine Center are “good job.” With a balance of challenge and encouragement, greater independence is the goal for each student and young adult.

Recognizing each individual’s abilities provides the building blocks for the development of the next set of skills. With daily opportunities for authentic experiences, participants enjoy a sense of accomplishment that leads them to the next goal.

From reading a book to friends for the first time to completing 30 minutes on the treadmill to simply saying “good morning,” we take every opportunity to celebrate each success.

Philip twisted screws into brackets from one of the vocational workboxes. He has progressed to using smaller screws and is able to complete the task in less time.



Francisco and Becca were regulars on our cleaning crew each day with Ms. Colleen.





Jessie read a story to Jake. Adults enjoyed reading to each other in peer-to-peer reading groups each afternoon.



Antonio made good progress this year using an iPad to identify and trace his letters.



Melissa learned how to stack and place planting pots so that she will be able to help when we return to vocational activities in the community.



The Adult Program depends on Patrick, who vacuums the group rooms every afternoon.

“ Saint Catherine Academy has been a gift for our son Philip. The talent, professionalism, care, compassion and support he has enjoyed there is preparing him for life after school. Now entering his seventh year, Philip has grown academically, socially and spiritually and he is becoming a well-rounded young man. Philip LOVES school and we are absolutely blessed to be part of this ‘family’. ”

Karen and Philip Palilla, parents

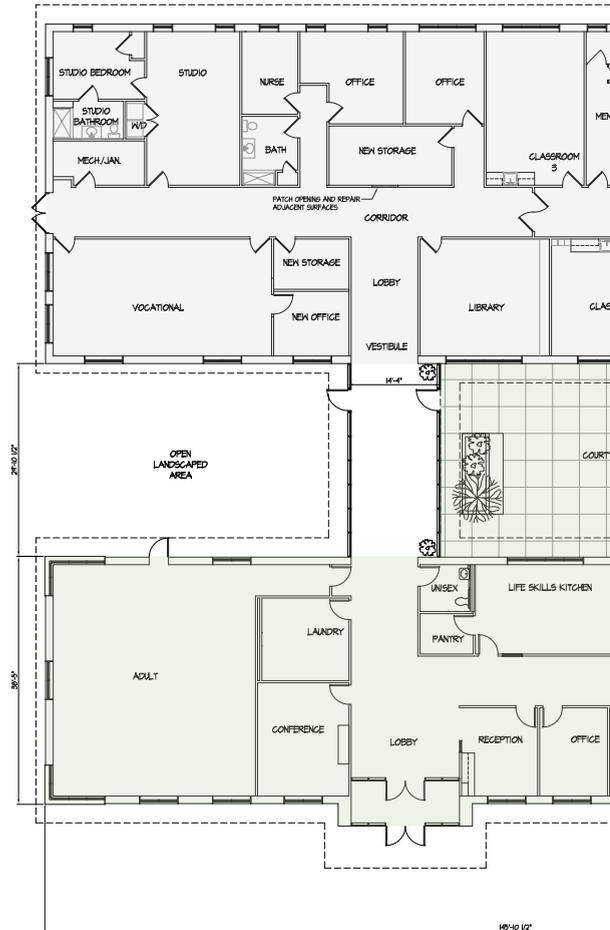


As the needs of our students and adults have evolved, so has our vision for the Center's future. The \$5M *Building For the Future* Campaign will more than double the footprint of our current facility and establish a reserve fund for program expansion and to sustain our mission in the long term.

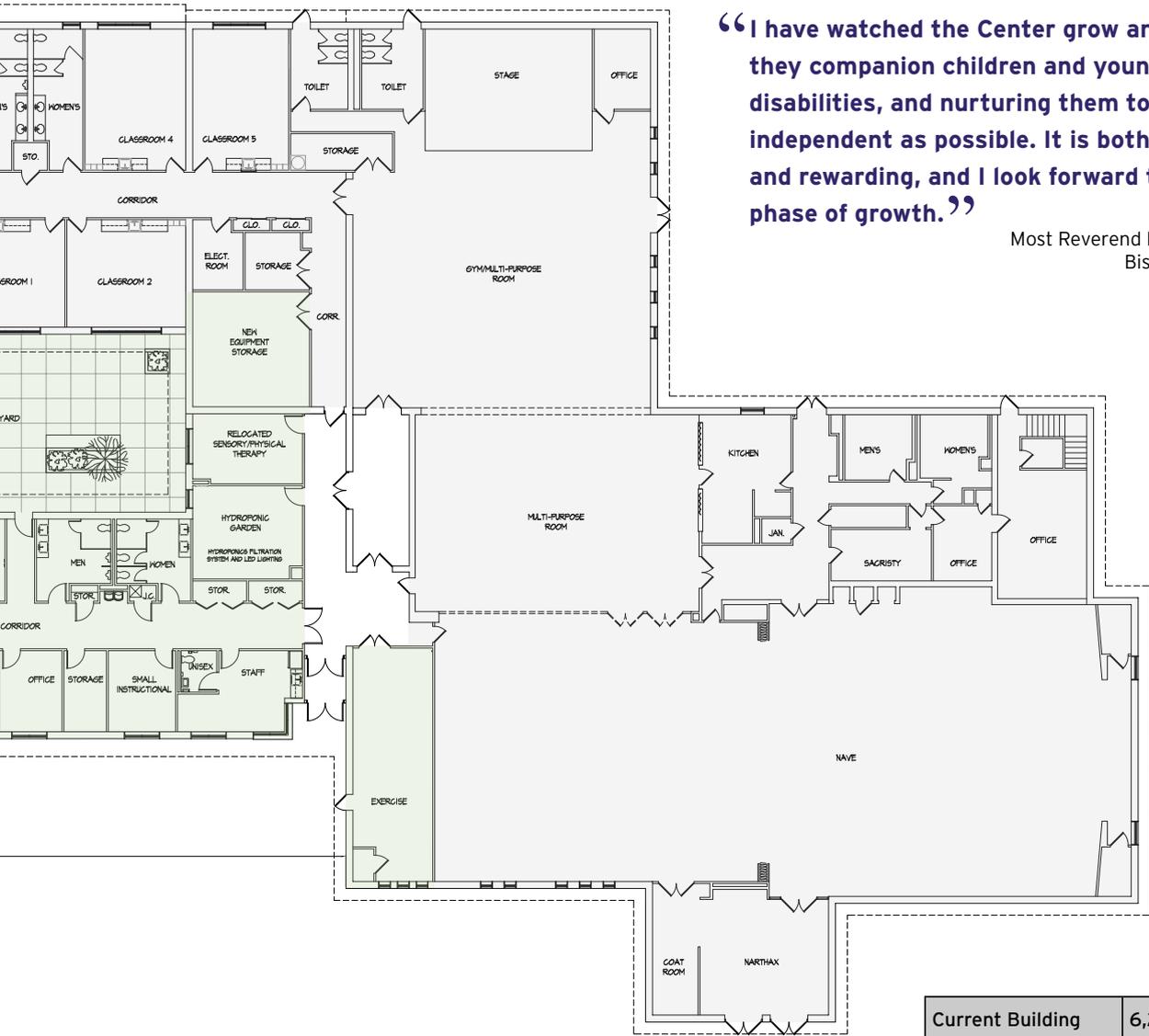
- *Imagine young people working together to grow vegetables and flowers in an onsite greenhouse, or making baked goods in a commercial kitchen.*
- *Imagine young people gathering in the evening for movies or games, or families meeting to support each other.*
- *Imagine students ages 18 to 21 engaging in meaningful preparation of life beyond school.*
- *Imagine more volunteer worksites, with more opportunities to build skills and interact in real-world settings.*
- *Imagine the freedom to respond to needs as they arise in the future.*

Construction is expected to begin in late spring 2022, and to open in 2023. We are grateful for the outpouring of support from our strong community of families, volunteers, and generous donors.

Visit the website for more information and to download the *Building For the Future* brochure: www.stcatherinecenter.org/future



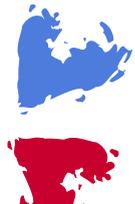
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE



“I have watched the Center grow and thrive as they companion children and young adults with disabilities, and nurturing them to become as independent as possible. It is both challenging and rewarding, and I look forward to this new phase of growth.”

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano,
Bishop of Bridgeport

Current Building	6,200 square feet
New Building	6,500 square feet
Total New Footprint	12,700 square feet





Support and Revenue (rounded to nearest 100)

Tuition and Program Fees*	\$1,945,396
Unrestricted Donations	367,379
Restricted Grants**	604,286
Investment Income	47,245
Diocesan Catholic Appeal	178,408
Total Revenue	\$3,142,714

Expenses

Program	\$2,106,379
Management	233,293
Fundraising	15,000
Total Expenses	\$2,354,672

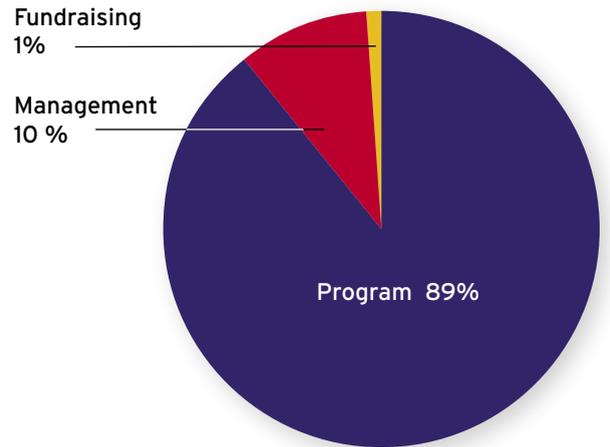
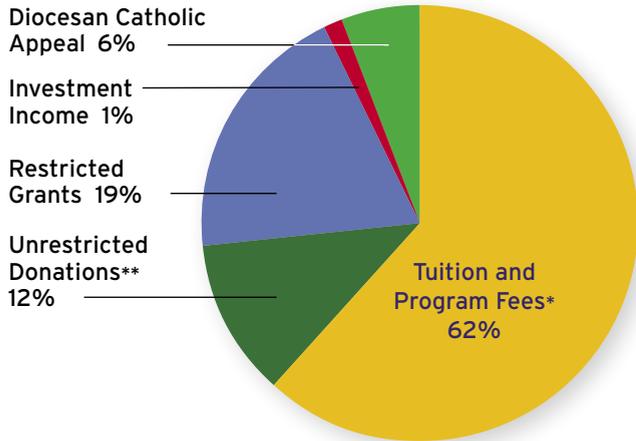
Audited financial statements and IRS 990 report will be available at StCatherineCenter.org by 12/2021.

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

*Awarded scholarships 131,000

** Restricted grant from The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education for scholarship endowment 500,000

Donations made to the *Building for the Future* Campaign totaled \$1,597,037 as June 30, 2021.



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Saint Catherine Center is proud to host these special events:

**MASS TO CELEBRATE
PEOPLE WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS**

Bishop Frank Caggiano,
celebrant

Sunday, November 7, 2021
2 p.m.

Holy Cross Church



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Thursday, December 23, 2021
10 a.m.

Saint Catherine Center

We are grateful for grants from Foundations in Education, Foundations in Faith, and The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education, whose generous support has enabled us to innovate our curriculum with a desktop robot, provide wheelchair accessible transportation, and create a scholarship fund for Academy students.

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St. Rose of Lima School
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**Board member 2020-21*

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



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE CAMPAIGN

We are grateful to the following individuals for their generous contributions to the *Building For the Future* Campaign. With this support we are well on our way toward meeting our \$5 million goal to expand our facility, enhance our programming, and invest in the future of the Center. List reflects gifts and pledges received through August 31, 2021.

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All contributions made in honor of Katherine Schlegel, both this year and previously, as well as gifts made to the Call For Charity at our 2019 Joy & Gratitude Dinner will be applied to the *Building For the Future* Campaign. *Board member 2020-21



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Special Needs

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