



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

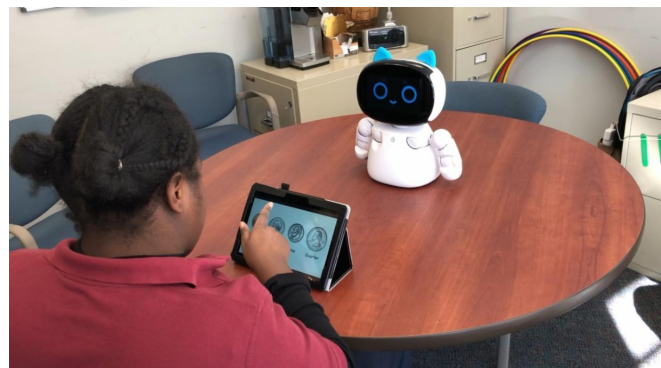
### *Meet Kebbi the Robot*

"Hello, Frank. It is so good to see you!" Kebbi, the Academy's new desktop robot, gives Frank a warm greeting. Twice each week, Frank spends 15 minutes with the robot which is specially designed to work with students who have autism (ASD). This week Frank is working with Kebbi on asking for help. In the background, Eric Spencer, Principal, makes small adjustments on a laptop which has been preloaded with Frank's lesson. Kebbi's voice is friendly and encouraging as it repeats directions to Frank to raise his hand and ask for help with zipping his coat. "Great job, Frank!"

Research shows that young people with autism often respond more easily to robots than humans. Robot-Assisted Instruction (RAI) has been found to help them develop and improve a range of skills, from following instructions and reading comprehension to social skills. Frank has become more confident and vocal since he began working with Kebbi. "The robot reinforces individualized learning," Eric said. "The results are different for each student but it supports everything else we do."

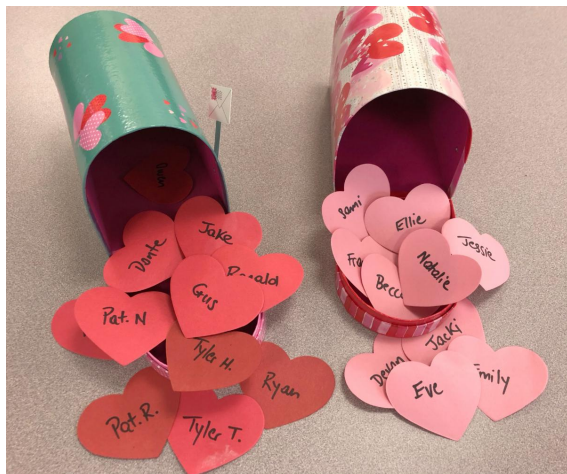
MOVIA Robotics provided the RAI system that includes the robot, a laptop and a tablet for student response. Lessons are personalized to students' needs, and designed to reduce the anxiety levels that many individuals with autism have in traditional social settings. Common social interactions are broken into small steps. Lessons also include academics, such as letter recognition and matching games, as well as role playing. Progress is tracked through the software and can be used to inform students' individual learning goals.

Four Academy students are currently spending time with Kebbi each week. "We're still learning how each student interacts with Kebbi," Eric said, "but we have noticed progress already. There's a consistency and predictability with the robot that allows our students to try things they might not try in the



classroom.”

*We are grateful to Foundations for Education, which provided the funding for this project.*



## *Creative Ideas Build Community*

During these winter months, staff continue to introduce creative indoor projects that help our adult participants connect with each other and enjoy being part of our community.

### **Valentine Card Exchange**

Everyone loves getting a message of kindness and affection from a friend—especially on Valentine’s Day.

To celebrate the day, participants in the Adult Program selected names from valentine mailboxes and are busy this week making cards for their secret someone. These will be exchanged at a party on Friday. “We wanted to make Valentine’s Day fun and special,” said Racquel Lynch, Activities Coordinator, who planned the project. “Everyone is really looking forward to it.” ([See some photos](#), and visit our gallery again this Friday to see more!)

Adult participants and students from the Academy also reached out to the wider community with homemade valentines for the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Wilton, who have been sequestered during the pandemic.

### **Saint Catherine Freedom Quilt**

Staff member Jennifer Cubero proposed creating a “Freedom Quilt” as a meaningful way to celebrate Black History month. According to legend, a safe house along the Underground Railroad was often marked by a quilt hanging from a clothesline or windowsill. While the quilts are more folklore than history, the stories they generate represent hope.

To create our “quilt,” staff and participants each chose patterned paper squares to color. The activity brought out each individual’s style.





Ronald took his time selecting five crayons, then colored precisely between the lines to create a beautiful square. Ellie colored her square on top of a puzzle for an interesting pattern. Together, the squares form a brilliant collage of color.

“You could say that the ‘quilt’ represents our community—different colors, different patterns, different styles,” said Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program. “I’m so impressed with the creativity of both staff and our individuals.”



## *Mark February 25th to "Give Where You Live"*

Saint Catherine Center will again be participating in Fairfield County Giving Day on Thursday, February 25th. The annual 24-hour online fundraising initiative, hosted by Fairfield County’s Community Foundation, builds awareness of local nonprofits, encouraging donors to “give where you live.” Last year, more than 390 organizations from all over Fairfield County participated.

Funds raised will support activities in our Adult Services Program, such as art, yoga, and music. These activities have been a mainstay in our programming over the past year, when we haven’t been able to go out into the community.

Tom Reynolds, a parent and partner at Media Horizons in Norwalk, is assisting us with Facebook ads on Giving Day to promote the Center. “It’s made all the difference that our son Gus has been able to be with his friends in-person at the Center, enjoying all the activities that are available,” Tom said. “I encourage everyone to be a part of Giving Day. Whether it’s a large donation or a small one—each gift makes a difference to the young adults at the Center.”

Please [bookmark our Giving Day page](#), watch for our emails on February 25th, and invite family and friends to join in supporting us.

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