

January 2023



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *"A Testament of Love and Service": Breaking Ground on the Expansion*

Waving pennants with the Center's four-hearts logo, Board members, parents, donors, staff, students and adults gathered on December 16th to celebrate groundbreaking on the building expansion project at Saint Catherine Center.

It was a rainy day, so the ceremony was held indoors with a wheelbarrow full of excavated dirt. Bishop Frank Caggiano joined the group to bless the project. Other guests included Jose Imery and Michael Ayles from the architectural firm Antinozzi Associates; Richard Jagoe, founder of the building firm Tomlinson Hawley Patterson (THP); and Jeff Price, site manager.

"Are we building a building?" Bishop Caggiano asked the group. "Yes. But we're really building a testament of love and service for those who come here to be not only educated and formed and accompanied, but to be loved." He expressed his gratitude to Executive Director Helen Burland for "a steady hand," and for the generosity of the Center's families and donors.

Construction is now fully underway. Trees on the perimeter have been removed to make room for a new playground; a pathway and emergency access road in the back have been completed. Temporary fencing and an alternate entrance have been established and what was a major portion of the parking lot has been excavated and leveled for the addition. The new foundation will be poured soon. ([View photos of the ongoing project](#))

Completion of the expansion is expected in late fall. "The only thing I like more than breaking ground," said Bishop Caggiano, "is blessing a finished project."

[View photos of the groundbreaking ceremony](#)



## At The Core: Celebrating the abilities and successes of each person

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 5: We celebrate the abilities and success of each person.

Successes large and small are celebrated at Saint Catherine Center. This provides the encouragement needed to try new things, and one newly learned skill makes another possible.

Each week as part of his vocational experience, **Antonio** has been cleaning at Watermark, a residence for seniors. The staff there have been impressed by his ability to stay on task. Feeling recognized and appreciated, Antonio now responds to their greetings with a smile and a wave.

**Tyler T.** has a natural gift for rhythm and lyrics, improvising on the spot. When he gets up to dance in Music, his enthusiasm is contagious and others cannot help joining in.

Recently **Ellie** has begun writing an email to her mom about the activities of the day. One of her annual goals is to increase conversational communication. Using technology gives Ellie a voice.

When **Izzy** first came to Saint Catherine Academy two years ago, communication was a challenge. Now, using his AAC (Augmentive and Alternative Communication) device, he is able to name what he needs and wants. He is now participating more in class.

We see successes like these every day at the Center. When a person feels valued and celebrated for who they are, he or she is better able to grow and thrive.

*Next month: We seek to build interpersonal relationships in a nurturing community.*



## Building Skills While Serving Others

Participants in the Adult Program are often serving others, whether it is their peers or others in the community.

During the holiday season, Team 2 decided to take on some projects to serve others in the community. First, they involved all teams in making holiday cards for the local senior center. Then the group decided that a batch of homemade dog biscuits and some fleece blankets might be appreciated at the dog shelter in Shelton. It was also an opportunity to build skills, such as following directions and staying focused.

“There are a lot of sequential skills involved in making dog biscuits,” Team Leader Carolynn Berritto said, including measuring flour and baby food, stirring and rolling out the dough, pressing shapes, and baking the biscuits.

“We often bake together in the Adult Program, but working in a smaller group we were able to do it start to finish, from set-up to clean-up,” Carolynn said. The team also knotted layers of fleece together into two-sided blankets for the animals. When the projects were complete, they delivered the biscuits and blankets to the shelter. Photos of the activity were printed to reinforce the whole experience.

Staff at Shelton Animal Control were pleased to receive the gifts and allowed the adults to see some cats in the facility that had recently been rescued.

“I think it’s really important for our individuals to see that their efforts make a difference,” Carolynn said. “Each individual feels involved and it gives them a feeling of pride and independence.”



## *The Christmas Spirit Continues*

After our annual Christmas Pageant in December was canceled due to bad weather, we rechanneled our Christmas spirit and presented “A Holy Night” on January 6th as a celebration of Three Kings Day. The students had rehearsed for several weeks and were



glad to have the opportunity to share the Nativity story with their families and friends of the Center.

The Pageant is an annual tradition that showcases all of the students. It is a great example of our core value that celebrates abilities and success. This year it also highlighted perseverance and resilience. Congratulations to our actors and staff for a job well done!

[View a short slideshow of photos](#)

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