



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

Hatching the Chicks

After reading an article about the lifecycle of chickens, Joanne LaPorta, a teacher at Saint Catherine Academy, wondered whether it might be possible to hatch some live chicks in the classroom. She found a local organization, Rent The Chicken, that would provide fertilized eggs and all the necessary equipment to hatch up to seven chicks. The idea quickly became a month-long science project for the entire school.



Classes watched videos and drew pictures of the lifecycle to prepare for the chicks' arrival. After the first few days in the incubator, the chicks' progress was monitored through a process called "candling," where a bright light held up to the egg showed the development of the embryo, which appeared as a dark mass moving inside the shell. Students could see veins pumping blood and the beginnings of feathers.



At 21 days, four of the chicks started "pipping," or pecking through their shells. "That's when the whole process became more real for the students," Joanne said. "They could really see there was a creature trying to get out." The first one hatched after school; by the next morning, all four chicks had arrived. Each class named one: Stan (after Stan Steele, a teaching assistant, pictured with his namesake), Daisy, Nugget, and Goldie. [View a 4-minute video of the first hatching.](#)



The classes gathered to set up the wood shavings in the brooder box and food and water for the hatchlings. There was also a special heater under which the chicks could rest and stay warm, especially for the first days. Over the following week, two classes took turns feeding them and cleaning the box. Each student had a chance to hold or stroke one of the chicks.

"The project was especially great because it involved all the senses. I'm not sure who had more fun—the students or the staff," said Eric Spencer, Principal. "Now that we know how it

goes, we will definitely hatch some chicks again next year.”

[View a gallery of photos from the Chick Project](#)



Adult Field Day: Cheers for Everyone



Our second Adult Program Field Day had a new feel to it, with green and red jerseys to delineate teams, blue jerseys for staff, and official looking striped shirts for the referees, Racquel Lynch and Branden Jackson. Karelle Watson was in charge of the music, which, along with the cheering, made the whole event even more festive.

“Betheney (Stevens) and I spent a lot of time figuring out which competitions would work best and give everyone a chance to participate and feel equal,” said Branden, who directed the activities of the day. “We wanted it to be competitive but fun.” [Enjoy a 3-minute slideshow](#)



Becca and Patrick N. had a chance to shine in the egg race as they made their way around the hoops balancing a plastic egg on a spoon. Frisbee and cornhole focused on hand-eye coordination and aim; kickball and the relay race got everyone moving and playing together as teams. Jessie got a cornhole on her first try, and Owen surprised everyone with his running in the relay race. Each event required teams to follow directions and wait for their turn.



By the end of the day, everyone was cheering for everyone. “There was more participation than ever. Staff, too. Everyone was engaged,” Branden said. “The theme of the day was to have fun. If we’re not having fun, what are we doing?”

During breaks, Betheney and Andrew Chavers put their artistic skills to work, painting temporary tattoos on all who wanted one. After lunch, of course, there was celebratory ice cream and certificates for everyone.

Farewell, Mrs. LaPorta

After 14 years as a teacher at Saint Catherine Academy, we bid farewell to Joanne LaPorta, who is moving to North Carolina at the end of the summer session. Teachers and staff gathered to celebrate with her at a special lunch in June.

"I've learned so much from the students and from my colleagues," Joanne said. "It's been so fulfilling to work with students with varying abilities and help them find ways to be successful."

Before becoming a teacher, Joanne and her husband owned a photo developing business. She also worked as a central supply clerk at Danbury hospital, and tutored blind middle school students. After a year of teaching gifted students with learning disabilities, Joanne was invited by then-Principal Sr. Marilyn Muldoon, OSU, to apply at Saint Catherine Academy. "It was a great fit," Joanne said. She remembers all her first students by name: Josh, Mina, Ariel, James, and Adrian. "They were so engaged and excited to be in school."

As the Center expanded, Joanne noted, more opportunities opened up to serve students with a variety of disabilities. She has especially enjoyed working with individuals with autism, trying different techniques to help them express themselves and find their strengths. "Joanne is a gifted teacher for students with special needs," said Eric Spencer, Principal. "She is patient and empathetic and always willing to try new things. And her staff and students love her."

"I feel more spiritual, more positive, and more confident from my time at Saint Catherine's," Joanne said. "I am going to miss everyone." She promises to keep in touch and visit when she is in the area.



Introducing Our New Adult Program Director

We welcome Racquel Lynch as the new Director of the Adult Services Program. Racquel has worked at Saint Catherine Center as Activities Coordinator and as a Direct

Service Provider for a total of six years. Prior to that, she was Assistant Group Home Manager at Kencrest Services in Trumbull.

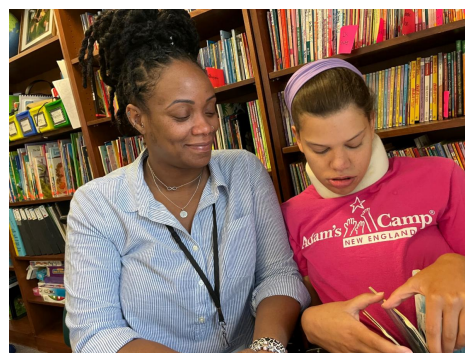
As you take on this role, do you have any special goals?

RL: I want to continue to build our team, discover their individual talents and skill sets and bring those out. I want them to get to know each other. Each person brings different ideas that can help the program develop. I also want to find ways to show staff they are appreciated—to generate a feeling of positivity and inclusivity. That feeling translates to a good experience for our individuals in the program.

Programmatically, I'm looking forward to doing more recreational activities and outings in the community. It's so important for us to be out and have "regular" experiences.

What challenges do you expect?

RL: There will definitely be some logistical challenges ahead as the new building project begins this fall, but I feel confident we'll figure it out. And there are challenges every day. Someone's having a bad day—it could be any of us, staff or participants—and we rally around to support them. One of my favorite phrases is "Teamwork makes the dream work." It's a little bit corny but it's true. We have a great team at Saint Catherine Center, and I'm so happy to be a part of it.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

We're sporting a Western theme this year. Invitations will be mailed in August.

**McClinch Family Center
St. Catherine of Sienna Parish
Trumbull**

5 to 9 pm

For more information about registration or sponsorships, call 203-540-5381

• COME ONE, COME Y'ALL! •

Joy & Gratitude

JOY AND GRATITUDE DINNER

Sunday, October 2, 2022



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