



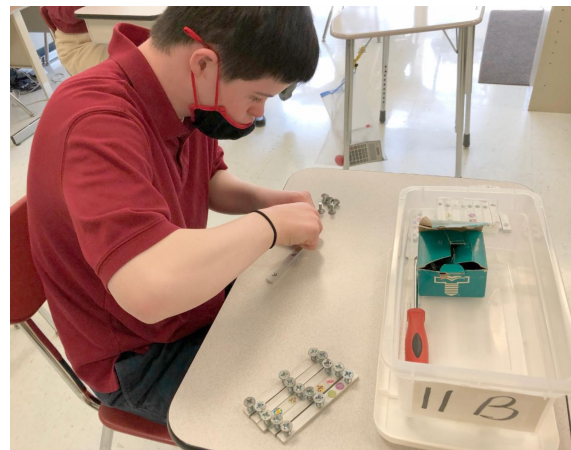
## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *Real Tasks Build Real Skills*

“What bills and change do you need to come up with 48 dollars and 38 cents?” Ms. Darlene, the Center’s Vocational Coordinator, prompts Anna who is honing her money skills. Math has never been Anna’s favorite subject, but with real bills and coins in hand and Ms. Darlene’s encouragement, she successfully counted out the sum.



While the pandemic has curtailed our vocational experiences in the community, the Center is still buzzing with activities onsite to build and maintain vocational skills, such as counting money. Academy students make use of “workboxes” created to incrementally build skills that may be generalized at community work sites. In a recent vocational session, Philip twisted screws into brackets as Sr. Cheryl Driscoll timed him. As his hand-eye coordination has improved, Philip has steadily progressed to smaller screws in a shorter amount of time.



In Mrs. Loh’s class, Luke has learned how to set up planting pots on trays that Ms. Darlene has brought in for practicing. His focus and flexibility continue to develop. When health restrictions are lifted, these skills will be applied to working at the local nursery.

Participants in the Adult Program are offered a variety of skill building and vocational opportunities, such as stacking pots, sorting and bagging items for recycling, preparing the garden beds for planting, and shredding documents.

All of the adult rooms at the Center have shredders. “Shredding is one activity everyone can do, and it can be done onsite,” said Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program. Ryan and Patrick R. from the Adult Program recently visited Sullivan Independence Hall in Fairfield to pick up some non-confidential documents to shred at the Center. Diane Auray, a Center board member and Chief Clerk for the Fairfield Probate Court, set up the arrangement. “We were so happy to have Patrick and Ryan,



along with Saint Catherine staff," she said. "Their work is a big help to us and we hope they can come back and do more!"

"We've been working hard to keep up our skills during the past year," said Ms. Darlene, "and we really look forward to being out in the community again when it's safe to do so."

*Our thanks to TD Charitable Foundation and First County Bank, generous supporters of the Vocational Program.*



## *What a Difference Eighteen Inches Makes*



Daily stretching on a padded mat provides visible relief to Tyler H., an Adult Program participant who spends most of his time in a wheelchair. With the Center's new "mat table," accessibility has become much easier for him. The 18-inch height of the table allows individuals to be easily and safely transferred from a wheelchair or a walker to the elevated mat instead of the floor, reducing the risk of injury.

Each week, physical and occupational therapists assist students in building strength, range of motion and endurance, and in improving gross motor functioning as part of their Individualized Education Plan. Adult staff aid adult participants to enhance mobility and strength while rolling and stretching on their back or stomach.

The mat table, which is set up in the Center's exercise/therapy room, offers a wide and sturdy surface where individuals can stretch or be stretched, spend time out of their wheelchairs, and perform exercises safely. It is also useful for practicing independent living skills, such as getting up from a prone or sitting position and getting dressed. Just sitting on the edge of the table helps to build core strength and balance.

"It's so much easier helping Tyler on and off the new mat table," said Jud Doyle, a staff member who often works with Tyler. "I don't worry about my back, and it's better for Tyler, too."

*We are grateful to the Westport Rotary Club for the funds to purchase the mat table.*





## *Celebrating Saint Catherine Academy Staff*



"She is my friend, my hero, and I love her," Philip said of his teacher, Sr. Cheryl Driscoll. The trust and affection the students feel for their teachers and assistants is apparent in their smiles and the joy they show as they come to school each day.

Last week was Teacher Appreciation Week, and the Academy celebrated our teachers and assistants with a special lunch, and a vase of daffodils that the students harvested from the bulbs that were planted last fall. "We're blessed with a dedicated and experienced group of teachers and devoted teaching assistants," said Eric Spencer, Director of Education. "Their compassion, patience, and experience with children who have special needs comes through every day."

National Nurses Week runs through May 12, and along with our teachers we would like to recognize Health Coordinator Yvonne Pacifico (above). Besides greeting all staff with a temperature check each day, "Nurse Yvonne" monitors the health of students and adults, dispenses medication, communicates with parents, coordinates the medical certification process for staff members, and provides valuable input into policies and procedures for the Center.

# A New Look for Our Website

We hope you'll visit

[www.StCatherineCenter.org](http://www.StCatherineCenter.org)

and take a look at our “refreshed” website. “We tried to both update our look and simplify the navigation,” said Helen Burland, Executive Director. “We hope it will make it easier for people to learn about the Center.”

Coming up next: a refresh of the Academy site.

