



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

Charles F. Chiusano to be honored at "Joy and Gratitude" Dinner on September 27

On Sunday, September 27th, Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs will host its annual Joy & Gratitude Dinner at The Inn at Longshore in Westport. This special community event brings together supporters, families, and friends to celebrate the mission of Saint Catherine Center while honoring an individual whose compassion and commitment have made a lasting impact on the lives of others. Guests will enjoy an evening featuring dinner, silent and live auctions, and an opportunity to support the Center's life-changing programs.

This year, Saint Catherine Center is proud to recognize Charles F. Chiusano as the recipient of its newly established Legacy Award, honoring his extraordinary years of leadership and dedicated service. Charles joined the Board of Directors as Chairman in 2007 at the request of Archbishop William Lori and has since played a transformative role in shaping the organization's growth and expanding its impact.



As Board Chairman, Charles has guided many of the Center's most significant milestones. His leadership helped establish the Adult Services Program, creating meaningful opportunities and continued support for individuals with disabilities beyond their school years. He also played a pivotal role in the Center's building expansion, which doubled its footprint and significantly increased its ability to serve more students and adults. In addition, his unwavering commitment to fundraising—including countless galas, special events, and capital campaigns—has helped sustain and strengthen the Center's mission for nearly two decades. Charles retired from the Board of Directors in December 2025.

Reflecting on his involvement, Charles said, "Of all my accomplishments, I am most proud of the joy and relief parents feel knowing their child is cared for." His words reflect the compassion that has defined his service and the profound difference he has made in the lives of countless families.

Charles and his wife, Ruth, have been married for 49 years and are the proud parents of one daughter, Christine. Deeply committed to his faith and community, Charles has served on numerous civic and charitable boards throughout Fairfield and is an active member of St. Pius X Parish. In recognition of his exceptional service to the Catholic Church, he was awarded the Benemerenti Medal by Pope Francis.

"Charles's commitment, visionary leadership, and genuine compassion have helped shape Saint Catherine Center into the organization it is today," said Laura Grozier, Executive Director of Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs. "His unwavering dedication to our mission has

created opportunities for so many individuals and families, and he is a truly deserving recipient of our inaugural Legacy Award."

Reserve Tickets or Become a Sponsor

Board Leadership Transition Strengthens Center



At Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs, strong leadership has always been a cornerstone of the organization's growth and impact. Central to that success is the organization's dedicated Board of Directors, an extraordinary group of volunteers who generously give their time, expertise, and strategic vision to advance the Center's mission. Each member plays a vital role in shaping the Center's direction and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

The Center extends its gratitude to Mike LaBella for his outstanding service as Chairperson over the past three years. During his tenure, Mike provided steadfast leadership and strategic direction that helped position the organization for continued success. Mike will remain on the board serving as the Immediate Past Chairperson. The Center is deeply grateful for his ongoing dedication.

Diane Auray is stepping into the role of Chairperson, previously serving as Vice Chairperson. Her leadership, experience, and passion for the mission make her well-suited to guide the board forward. Supporting Diane is Kathy Olsen, who transitions from Treasurer to Vice Chairperson. Kathy's organizational knowledge and financial expertise will continue to be assets in her expanded leadership position.

The board also welcomes Dan Smith as its new Treasurer. Dan brings strong financial stewardship and expertise to the team. Michele Rivelli will continue to serve as Secretary, bringing her professional knowledge as a pediatrician and personal connection to the Center as a parent of an individual enrolled in our Adult Program.

Together, the Board's leadership team and members will continue building on the Center's strong foundation, ensuring that its mission remains vibrant, impactful, and responsive to the needs of individuals with special needs and their families.

*If you can not attend our gala but would like to make an event donation,
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