

July 2024



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

From Students to Graduates

June 14th was a momentous day as Vincent DiProperzio and Luke Norris graduated from Saint Catherine Academy. The ceremony began with a special Mass to honor the graduates, celebrated by Reverend Christopher Ford.

The graduation Mass was enriched by the active participation of students and staff. Readings and intercessions were delivered by classmates and teachers who have been alongside Vinny and Luke in their educational journey. Graduates and their families presented the offertory gifts.

Alongside Eric Spencer, Academy principal, was Patrice Kopas, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, who proudly presented the certificates of completion to the graduates. The ceremony concluded with a touching tribute from Mr. Spencer, who shared about Vinny and Luke's profound impact on the school and larger community. His heartfelt words captured the essence of the graduates and what they will be missed for—their unique personalities and the indelible mark they left on their peers and teachers.

At the conclusion of the Mass, the students joined Sr. Cheryl in singing "This Little Light of Mine," a Saint Catherine Academy tradition for special events and a song that resonated with the day's theme.

Following the Mass, the celebration continued with a lunch reception and cake, providing the opportunity for families, classmates, and staff to reflect on the journey Vinny and Luke completed. The gathering was filled with laughter, stories, and a shared sense of pride in the graduates' growth and accomplishments over the years.

Vinny and Luke were given the honor of ringing the "Burland Bell" in the Center's



courtyard. This honor is bestowed upon students who achieve significant recognition, marking their accomplishment with a resonating sound that echoes the pride and joy of the entire community.

We are all so proud of Vinny and Luke, their graduation is not only a personal achievement but a testament to the supportive and nurturing environment provided by our Academy teachers and staff. We look forward to celebrating their successes and the bright futures ahead for them.

[Click here for more photos.](#)



A Heartfelt Goodbye

Saint Catherine Academy bids a heartfelt farewell to our beloved Director of Education, Mr. Eric Spencer, who announced his retirement after six years of dedicated service. Mr. Spencer has been an integral part of the school's community, leaving a lasting impact on students and staff.



Mr. Spencer's daily presence at the school's entrance, where he greeted each student with a friendly smile and warm welcome, became a cherished routine. Rain or shine, he stood outside every morning, ensuring every student began their day feeling welcomed and valued.

Beyond his morning routine, Mr. Spencer's commitment to the students extended to every aspect of school life. He was a familiar figure on the playground, often actively participating in activities, fostering a safe and playful environment for all. His hands-on approach and attentive supervision ensured the school ran smoothly and efficiently, with the well-being of the students always a top priority.

Staff and parents trusted Mr. Spencer's leadership and valued his open communication. His genuine care for each member of our community created a positive atmosphere where everyone felt welcomed.

As we prepare for the next chapter, the legacy of Mr. Spencer will continue to inspire and guide. The entire school community extends its best wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

"Being the Director of Education at Saint Catherine Academy has been the most rewarding of all my work experiences. The students, parents and staff are truly remarkable. I have high hopes for the future of the Academy and look forward to watching the entire Center grow into a hub for those students and adults with special needs." – Eric Spencer

Wishing a Happy Retirement



Ms. Darlene Jacobacci retired from her role as Vocational Coordinator for the Academy after fifteen years. During her 30-year career in the diocese, Ms. Darlene started as a para professional at Saint Joseph school in Shelton, where she worked with preschool, kindergarten, and first grade students. When she arrived at Saint Catherine Academy, Ms. Darlene was a teacher's aide. With the creation of the vocational program, she became a vital figure in the vocational journey of countless students, working to ensure their success and growth.

Ms. Darlene's approach was hands-on and personal for each student. She collaborated with each job site, keeping strong relationships with employers to create supportive and enriching environments for our students to work. Her frequent visits to the sites were not just about monitoring progress; they were about nurturing each student's potential and confidence. Her dedication ensured that students were good workers and focused on the task at hand. She provided the necessary assistance to students when they faced challenges but always focused on helping them become independent and confident in their abilities.

Ms. Darlene's ability to connect with students on a personal level, understanding their unique strengths and challenges, has made her a beloved figure in the school. The joy and respect students give her speaks volumes to her ability to teach and empower them. Her dedication went beyond her duties; it was a genuine commitment to the growth and success of each student.

Ms. Darlene's presence at the Center will be missed. Her contributions have not only advanced the vocational skills of our students but have also instilled in them a sense of pride and accomplishment. Her efforts shaped the vocational program at Saint Catherine Academy, creating a strong foundation for continued success. We extend our deepest gratitude for Ms. Darlene for her years of exemplary work and wish her a fulfilling and joyous retirement.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

SAVE THE DATE

Saint Catherine Academy

25TH

Anniversary Mass

Sunday, September 22, 2024

2 PM

HOLY CROSS CHURCH
760 Tahmore Drive
Fairfield, CT 06825

SAVE THE DATE

Joy & Gratitude

ANNUAL GALA

OCTOBER

SUNDAY

6

2024

SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

McClinch Family Center
St. Catherine of Siena Parish
Trumbull, CT



NEW CANAAN
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Thank you New Canaan
Community Foundation for
supporting our Arts, Movement
and Music program



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