



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

The Gift of Purpose

Providing opportunities to be useful is a significant part of our mission at Saint Catherine Center. Whether the activity is small or large, everyone appreciates having a sense of purpose.

“Bread Today?”

When the Adult Program first began collecting end-of-day donations from Panera Bread, Ellie helped to wrap the donated loaves and pastries which were then delivered to Merton House in Bridgeport. The task appealed to her sense of order and made use of her excellent sorting skills. Over the past year, Ellie has gradually taken ownership of the role. She is now our primary bread packager, working independently, carefully sorting and bagging the bagels according to type. “Bread today?” she asks every week as Friday approaches, looking forward to the satisfaction that comes with independence and purpose.

“Ellie goes to bed on Thursday nights excited about ‘packing the bread’ day on Friday,” Ellie’s mother Sarah said. “She always has to make sure she doesn’t miss a Friday. Her brothers and sisters get all excited with her. Whether it’s bread, or sorting, or feeding others—this activity sure floats her boat!”

PB&J Fridays

Nothing provides a greater sense of purpose than coming together to help others.

Since 2008, Academy students, staff, and volunteers from the Order of Malta have made 300 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches each month for Merton House. During the pandemic, students and staff have continued the tradition. With a role for everyone, the community service project provides an opportunity to work as a team while developing social, organizational, and motor skills. The morning begins with a prayer service that highlights the importance of caring for our neighbors.

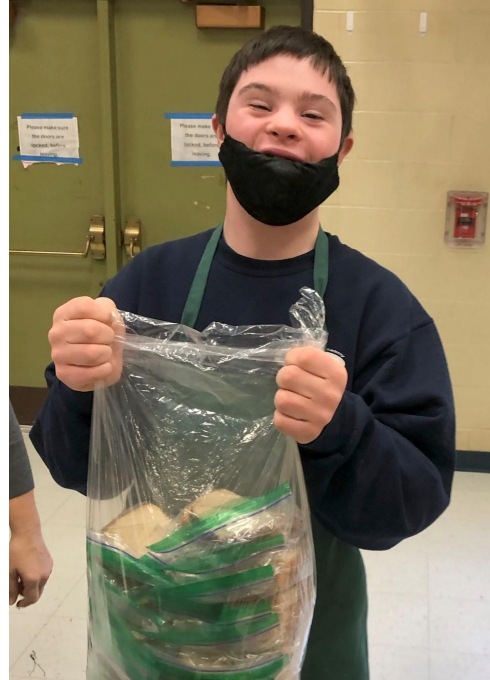
On a recent “PB&J Friday,” with music playing in the background, Luke opened the sandwich



bags; Anna honed her jelly-spreading; Frank and Vinny practiced cutting sandwiches in two; and Philip packaged and sealed the bags. Afterward, the students cleaned and moved the tables, gathered the utensils and aprons to be washed, and celebrated another successful month. There is always a palpable sense of pride among the students at completing the job, along with the knowledge that the sandwiches are needed and appreciated at Merton House.

“We thank Saint Catherine Center for their dedication, continued support and friendship,” said Bill Colson, Director of The Thomas Merton Center. “Your donations have made it possible to continue our mission, which means the less fortunate will not go hungry.”

At right, Sabine Kuczo, Operations Coordinator at the Merton Center, receives the bread packaged by Ellie.



**Doug Flutie Jr.
Foundation for Autism**

Foundation Provides First-Ever Grant to Saint Catherine Center



Tyler T. from the Adult Program shows off a

During the past year, we have depended on technology more than ever to stay connected onsite in our smaller groups and with those who have remained at home. We are grateful to The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, which recently awarded the Center a grant for \$6,344 through the Allison Keller Education Technology Grant program to purchase ViewBoards and fund professional development for our staff. ViewBoards are interactive touch screens that allow participation for at-home and in-building students and young adults.

Celebrate Volunteers!

Volunteer Week is April 19-23. While we haven't been able to have volunteers be with us onsite over the past year, we have certainly felt their support. To all our volunteers: Thank you for your library Zoom sessions, for providing supplies for monthly PB&J Fridays, for leading our gym class, for taking the vans in for oil changes, and for supporting us with your calls and good wishes. We especially thank our Board of Directors, who have been there for us assisting in planning and strategizing during a challenging time and as we look toward the future. We look forward to the time we can welcome you all back in the building!



Spring has sprung!
Enjoy this short slideshow
of our Easter egg hunt
and other spring activities.

