



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR  
*Special Needs*

## *Hands Raised for a Happy New Year*

Have you made your resolutions for 2021 yet?  
What do you hope for in the New Year?

When asked to express their hopes and resolutions for 2021, some of us responded with the familiar, such as to “eat healthy” and “get more exercise. Others reflected more personal goals: Fabricio wants to work hard in math; Eve resolves to be a “good helper;” and Jessie would like to be a mermaid!

Our hopes “for peace” and “health for all people” feel particularly meaningful right now. As we move forward into this New Year, we are grateful for our community that is founded on kindness and respect. We posted our hopes and resolutions on a bulletin board as a reminder of what is important to us.

Now is the time to dream big and not be afraid to say our dreams out loud!

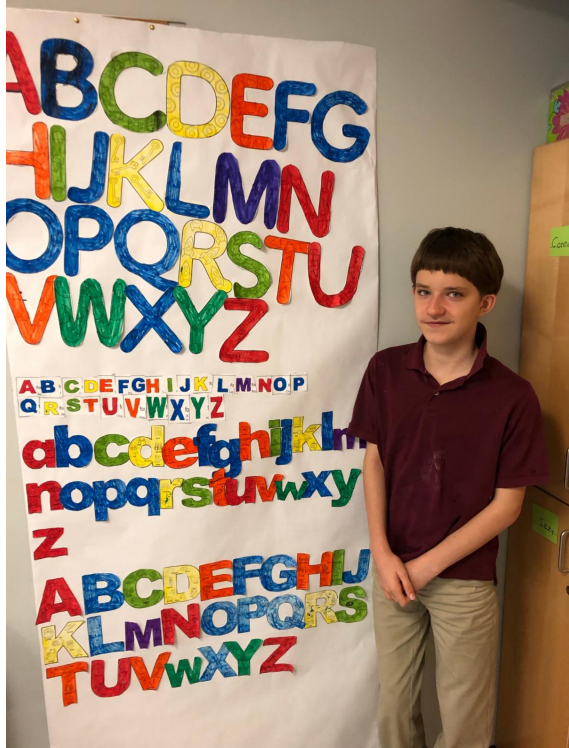


## *Turning What You Love into Learning*

When Connor first arrived at the Academy in September, his alphabet puzzle arrived with him. Having the familiar letters nearby and repeating them frequently was a way for Connor, who has autism, to feel comfortable in a new situation.

“The alphabet has been Connor's favorite thing since he and his twin brother were toddlers,” said his mother Geri. Their favorite show was “WordWorld,” where all the characters and objects are made of the letters that spell what they are, such as “duck” and “house.”

“He loves the alphabet because he knows all



words are created from it,” Geri said. “We have different alphabet artwork all over the house. There is not a bare wall!”

Connor was familiar with upper and lowercase letters, consonants and vowels, and certain phonics rules, such as the silent “e” at the end of a word that triggers a long vowel sound.

One afternoon Connor was looking with interest at the classroom wall and said to Mrs. LaPorta, “ABC wall?” This gave her an idea. She papered a portion of the wall and over the next week Connor created an alphabet wall which includes both capital and lowercase letters. Words that begin with each letter are part of the display.

The alphabet wall has helped Connor learn new skills by sounding out words he doesn’t know. This has helped him in social studies and science.

“His comprehension has really improved,” said Mrs. LaPorta. “We’ve taken what Connor loves and turned it into learning. Now he comes in with a smile—and he leaves with a smile.”



## Gratitude in the New Year

Saint Catherine Center’s donors responded generously to our year-end appeal that began with Giving Tuesday on December 1st. “Our

supporters believe in our mission, and we especially appreciate their generosity this year,” said Helen Burland, Executive Director. “Their support has helped us to safely provide in-person services, which is so important for the young people we serve.”

Here is what some of our donors say about why they support the Center:

*“For me, Saint Catherine Center is a constant reminder about how we should love people for who they are, instead of judging them for who they’re not. The Center has maintained its focus on individuals’ capabilities rather than their disabilities, reminding each of us that we’re made in the image and likeness of God. It doesn’t matter how slowly one learns, as long as they’re encouraged to continue learning. I love the program. It’s inspiring, a noble cause. We’re blessed to have the Center in our Community.”* Steve Lewine

*“We support Saint Catherine’s because we believe in its mission to respect, support, and love each child as a unique and valued gift, and to encourage each person’s potential. Over many years as a volunteer, I have witnessed the loving, caring, and respectful community that is Saint Catherine’s. It is a joyful, happy, and fun place to learn and grow! The students and staff are dear to my heart. I am filled with tremendous joy and gratitude that such a place exists in our diocese.”* Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama

[Gifts to the annual fund](#) have a direct impact on our daily programming, from art, music, and yoga to low staff ratios that promote individualized learning. We appreciate your support all year long!

