

July 2020



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

Reopening with Confidence

After more than three months at home, Academy students were glad to be back as summer school began last week. Students have quickly adjusted to a “new normal” that includes face masks, daily temperature checks, and keeping a safe distance apart. We could feel the genuine happiness and joy as students and staff were reunited.

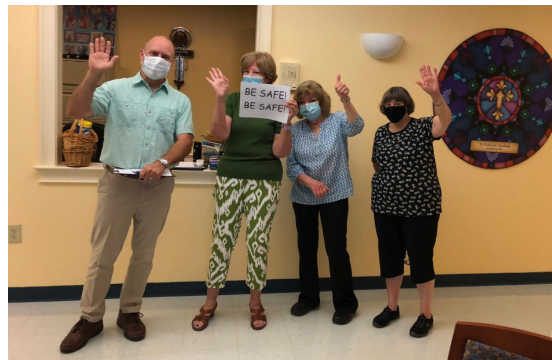
“It’s so good to be back and hanging with my friends. I’m having a good time,” said Anna Stowe.

The Center’s new routine is the result of several weeks of collaborative planning. From staggered scheduling, to twice-daily cleaning and classroom layout, the Center has carefully incorporated the recommendations of the State Department of Education and the Department of Developmental Services, as well as other guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC, all of which are [posted on our website](#).

“We’re reopening with confidence,” said Helen Burland, Executive Director. “We convene each day and decide what needs to be adjusted, striving for as much accessibility and individual attention as possible. And while there are extra layers of caution now, this is what we’ve always done at Saint Catherine Academy.”

In the classrooms, desks are spaced apart and facing the same direction. Using consistent, positive messages such as “Be Safe” and “Quiet Hands,” staff emphasizes the importance of hand washing and social distancing. Illustrated signs throughout the building reinforce these messages.

Students are appreciating the structure and the return to familiar routines. Yoga is held in the gym and is live streamed from a nearby laptop to students who are attending virtually. Therapists are also back on the schedule, providing individual



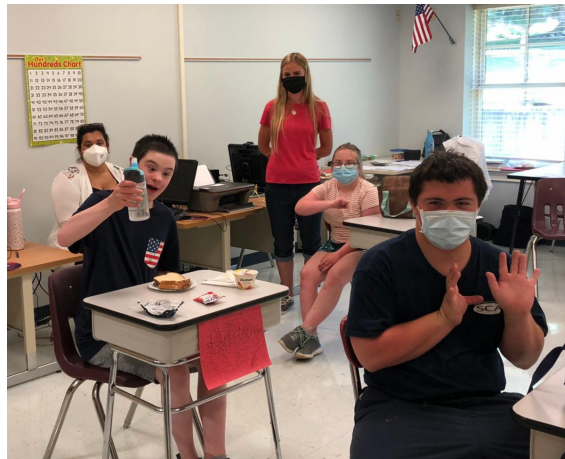
speech and occupational therapy both onsite and online. Weekly music sessions with Mr. Matt continue online.

Lessons learned during summer school will provide a model for the reopening of the Adult Program on July 20. In “Phase I,” 17 of the 26 adult participants will join staff onsite in a carefully staggered schedule that reduces density and allows for maximum use of the building. Some participants will attend daily for fewer hours while others will attend for full days every other day in three “cohorts” that will stay with each other and designated staff.

Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program, and her staff have been planning how to optimize the space in the building. The main program room and library have been set up with stations for art, reading, shredding, and other hands-on activities. The bedroom in the Life Skills Apartment has been reappropriated as an isolation room in the event that any individual does not feel well. Partitions have been ordered to create smaller spaces in the gym, and picnic tables with pop-up tents will create outdoor classrooms.

Recognizing that not all students and adults are ready to return in person, both programs will maintain a hybrid approach. While two classes are in session, a third teacher logs in to Zoom to connect with the students who have elected to attend summer school virtually. When adults return to the Center, Zoom sessions will continue daily for the participants still at home.

As the first week of summer school came to a close, it was clear that one important thing in our “new normal” hasn’t changed: the sounds of laughter and encouragement. “I love hearing everyone’s voices and the laughter. It’s been too quiet around here,” said Helen.



[View more photos](#) of the first days of summer school

DONATE NOW

Please support our mission.
Now, more than ever, your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Joy and Gratitude

SAVE the DATE

We've rescheduled our event!

Sunday, October 11, 2020

Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs



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