



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR
Special Needs

From Quiet to Confident

As a newcomer to the Adult Program last summer, Nick was quiet and observant. “Our group is very lively, with a lot of different personalities,” said Carolynn Berritto, the staff Team Leader in his room. “At first Nick just watched, taking it all in.”

Nine months later, Nick welcomes his peers by name as they come in each morning. He’s still soft-spoken, but is more vocal and frequently initiates the conversation. “I think part of Nick’s increased confidence is about being part of an accepting community,” Carolynn said. “We challenge him, but there are a lot of laughs along the way.”

Nick’s ability to follow directions and stay on task is making a difference at the volunteer worksites he goes to each week. At Woofgang, where our adults make batches of specialty dog treats, Nick can complete the roster of tasks without prompting, from measuring to mixing and stamping out the dough for baking. At Merton House he organizes the cans of food and other items and shelves them without assistance, and in one recent shift at Gilbertie’s Herb Gardens, he arranged and stacked 75 trays of planting pots. “I think that was a record,” Carolynn said.

Whether he is bowling, creating Valentine art, or stacking potting trays, Nick likes to move and work fast. Sometimes that drive to get things done is a challenge. One way that staff have worked with Nick to slow down and focus on the quality of what he is doing is by practicing penmanship and writing his name. That discipline is helping him take his time with other tasks.

Nick is keenly aware of those around him, and always eager to help his peers without being asked. “Nicholas is always excited to come to the Center,” said his mother, Barbara. “On the days he hasn’t been able to come, he is wondering what his friends there are doing. He is making progress, learning different jobs, enhancing his socialization skills, learning his



strengths, and increasing his focusing skills. Each and every day he is welcomed with love, understanding and acceptance. We feel very blessed that he is part of the Saint Catherine Center family.”



Building Real-World Skills at Mr. Jim's Store



“Vinny, let’s buy some Cheerios,” suggested his teacher, Jim Winebrenner. Vinny approached the cart of items in the “in-class store” and quickly identified the box of cereal. “How much do they cost?” Jim asked. Vinny pointed to the price: \$4.35. “So how many dollar bills do we need?”

At his desk, Vinny looked at his “number line” to confirm the number to round up to and carefully counted out five dollar bills from the cash register drawer used to practice counting money. Then Briana, his classmate, took a turn to find an item.

“I want the students to connect the concept of money with buying common items,” Jim said. “To make it more real, we decided to create our own ‘store’ right here in the classroom.” Staff brought in empty egg and cereal cartons, cans of soup, salad dressing, soap and other common grocery items to stock the store.



Jim’s simple in-class store is a creative example of the Academy’s Life Skills curriculum in action, integrating functional academics and important real-world skills. Students practice identifying coins and bills and rounding up as part of their math goals. They are also learning to recognize familiar food items and find the price. The next challenge will be making change. Each small step is a movement toward more independence.

Regular trips to the grocery store were put on hold during the pandemic, but Jim hopes to schedule an outing soon. “For now, I want the students to be able to go into a store, find what they want, figure out how many bills they need, and pay for it—just like we all do,” Jim said. A visit to the grocery store is on the horizon.



We Are Grateful

We are grateful for recent grants from these organizations and foundations:

Ernest and Joan Trefz Foundation – *Building For the Future* expansion

TD Charitable Foundation – Vocational Program

The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism – new iPads

Westport Rotary Club – funds toward our new wheelchair van

Foundations in Faith – mini grant for Joint Staff Development Day

Westport Woman's Club – funds toward a Hoyer lift

Joy and Gratitude

ANNUAL DINNER

Save the Date

Sunday, October 2, 2022



Make plans now to join us
at the McClinch Family Center at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.
Invitations will be mailed in August.

Spring has Sprung!

[Enjoy some recent photos of our programs](#)



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