



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

Welcome Back: A New School Year Begins

Academy students received a warm welcome on their first day back in school. You could tell by their smiles that they were glad to be back.

Everyone is already working hard. “We’ve been reviewing our words, practicing our handwriting, and getting back into the routine,” said Sr. Cheryl Driscoll. “My hope is for a happy, fun-filled year.”

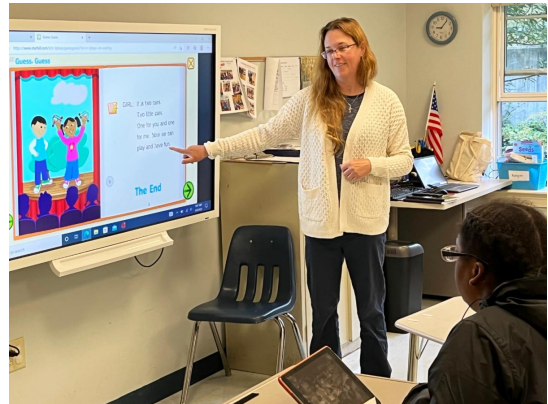
We welcomed some new faces: Kathleen Smith, a new teacher (pictured right), comes to the Academy with over a decade of teaching in an inner-city public school. “I want my students to feel welcomed and comfortable, and help them work hard toward their potential,” she said. Keona, a new student from Fairfield, has joined her class. Bradley, another new student from Easton, joined Jim Winebrenner’s class over the summer.

Sr. Marilyn Muldoon, who was principal of the Academy from 2001 to 2014, has taken on a teaching role. “I am enjoying getting to know my students and their individual needs,” she said. “These first weeks I’m focused on creating a calm and peaceful atmosphere for learning.”

It will be a busy year, as the Academy is also preparing for the APSEP (Approved Private Special Education Program) evaluation for reapproval, which involves a review of all programming and procedures.

“I’m so impressed with our staff and their enthusiasm and patience as they help students acclimate after being away for six weeks,” said Eric Spencer, Principal. “We’re off to a great start!”

[View some photos from our first week.](#)



When Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs was formed in 2014, the Board of Directors and staff came together to create a set of [Core Values](#) to describe what is important to us and to guide us in our work with young people with disabilities. Over the next several months, we will share stories from the Saint Catherine community that show our Core Values in action.

Core Value 1: We respect the dignity and diversity of each person.

All of our Core Values derive from this one. As we respect *diversity of ability*, we also acknowledge the dignity of each individual. Respect is shown through getting to know each student and adult and meeting them where they are. It is shown through adaptation and accommodation, and offering opportunities to learn and to shine.

Communication is one area of diversity. Many of our students and adults are “non-verbal,” but this doesn’t stop them from communicating! As Branden Jackson, Team Leader in the Adult Program says, “Everyone has their own lingo.” For instance, Ryan uses some common sign language to express his needs, but he also has many signs of his own. When asked recently where he had been, Ryan put his hands out as if on a steering wheel, then together as if in prayer, and then he reached out his hand as though he were wiping something. Translation: His team had driven to Black Rock Church where they cleaned tables.

“Once you learn each individual’s sign language, it’s easy to understand what they’re saying,” said Racquel Lynch, Director of the Adult Program.

Dignity grows with a sense of purpose and independence. Toward the end of each day, Patrick N. vacuums the group rooms. He is thorough and enthusiastic, and takes pride in “doing it right.” Patrick’s work ethic at the Center extends to his vocational experiences at Woofgang and Black Rock Church, where he has a reputation for being a good worker.

Each week, as part of our Vocational Program, Anna sets tables and wraps silverware at Vazzy’s Restaurant. As she has become more skilled, Anna and her mother have arranged for her to work there on Saturdays, with support from the restaurant staff. This is an important step toward greater independence and the dignity that is part of that.

Next month’s Core Value: We serve people of all races, ethnicities, faiths, and economic backgrounds.



Anne McCrory and Jerry Hemenway are Honorees at "Joy & Gratitude" Dinner on October 2

Anne O. McCrory and Charles "Jerry" Hemenway will be recognized for Leadership and Volunteer Service at our annual "Joy & Gratitude" Dinner on Sunday, October 2. The event will be held at the McClinch Family Center at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

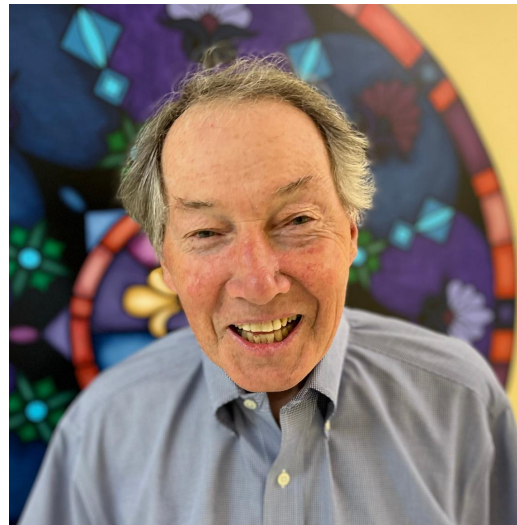
As Chief Legal and Real Estate Officer for the Diocese, Anne McCrory has played a significant role for Saint Catherine Center as a key resource and advisor in everything from the Center's lease to its expansion plans. "I've always been extremely proud to represent the Center and humbled by their work and unwavering dedication to the mission of the families they serve," Anne said. She will receive the Leadership Award.

Jerry Hemenway will be recognized for his Volunteer Service. His medical background as a pediatrician in Fairfield for the past 48 years was helpful as the Center addressed the complexity of providing direct service during the pandemic. Through his practice, Jerry has acted as an advocate for the Center, referring patients when appropriate. As a Board member for the past 22 years, he has witnessed Saint Catherine Academy's move from the Catholic Center to Fairfield in 2007, its evolution into Saint Catherine Center, and is now looking forward to the Center's expansion over the next year.

"This has been one of the best chapters in my life," Jerry said. "I have enjoyed it tremendously. Seeing the school grow, the students thrive, the dedication of the staff, Helen's leadership, the enthusiasm of the Catholic community in the Diocese, and the gratitude of the parents has made it all more than worthwhile."

"In their different roles, both Anne and Jerry have been there for us as advisors and advocates, especially as we have grown," said Helen Burland, the Center's Executive Director. "We're so glad to have this opportunity to celebrate their service."

[Click to register for the event or make a donation](#)



• COME ONE, COME Y'ALL! •

Join us
for an evening of
**Joy
&
Gratitude**

Sunday, October 2, 2022
5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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

Casual or Western Style attire



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