

April 2020



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *Our Community is Staying Together While We Are Apart*

After the first week of “school at home,” Philip, an Academy student, opened his living room window and called out the name of every person he knew, then exclaimed, “*Where are you?!?*”

Philip’s question embodies the need we all feel to stay connected, now more than ever. When the decision was made to close the Center four weeks ago, staff quickly regrouped to find ways for our students and young adults to continue to progress academically and maintain their living skills while at home.

Academy teachers and assistants have been reaching out regularly to individual families with lesson plans and suggestions for adapting material and activities at home. Students are completing worksheets, exercising, and trying out recipes sent out by their teachers. For students who do not have access to a printer, teachers are mailing packets to their homes. “We’re following each student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as much as possible,” said Eric Spencer, Director of Education. “It’s been helpful for our students and their families just to hear a teacher’s familiar voice on the phone, checking in.”

In the Adult Program, each of the 15 Direct Service Professionals (DSP) have taken one or two young adults on a rotating basis for the duration of the home stay. They call or FaceTime each day, talking with participants about what they have been doing, and sometimes sharing photos. Like the students, participants have been doing their ADLs (Activities of Daily Living), practicing their letters, watching movies, and talking to grandparents on Zoom. From her “home office,” Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program, also sends each family a daily schedule of activities for their young

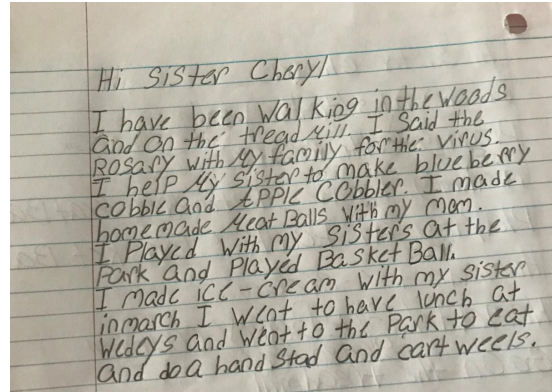


adult to help keep the structure of the day as similar to the Center as possible while remaining flexible.

“The daily FaceTime contact with Samera [DSP] has been a touchstone for Jessie in her long day at home,” said one parent, Michelle Rivelli. “Jessie has practiced her conversation skills, shown Samera her various craft projects and worksheets, and modeled her Disney costumes! Especially during this time of uncertainty, it is heartwarming to see how invested the Center is in Jessie’s welfare.”



Staff are meeting several times each week via Zoom to share their interactions with participants and families and strategize the best way to connect and adapt. A [webpage of resources](#) has been created for families to access, including a variety of links to academic resources, virtual tours, videos of staff and volunteers reading stories, art projects, a cooking project, and more. This past week, Matthew Hennessey, who provides music therapy to the Center, held live music classes on Zoom. The onscreen greetings were long and enthusiastic, as individuals recognized each other and enjoyed Mr. Matt’s familiar songs together.



“Philip loved the Zoom music session,” his mother Karen said. “When he can see and interact with his classmates and the staff, he lights up and things become much more real. The learning information, YouTube videos and all that has been provided by the staff is VERY much appreciated.”



“The Saint Catherine community has always been very strong, and that is serving us well in this time,” said Helen Burland, Executive Director. “In answer to Philip’s question, ‘Where is everybody?’, we say ‘We’re here!’ and will continue to do all we can to keep our community connected.”



**Some featured videos** (see more on the [Resources](#) page):

[“We Miss You!”](#) A slideshow of our students and adults



["Hello from Saint Catherine Center Staff!"](#)

[Fr. Eric Silva offers a blessing](#) for Saint Catherine Center

[Jeanie Tisdale reads "Stellaluna"](#)

[Coin Art with Ms. Megan](#)



**Our annual "Joy & Gratitude" Dinner is postponed  
from June 7 until later in the summer.**

**Stay tuned for more information!**

**THANK YOU for your support.**

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