

September 2020



## SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

### *The School Year Begins!*

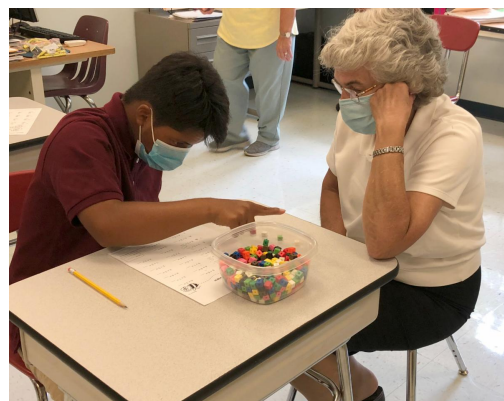
A successful summer school session in July helped us prepare classrooms and schedules for a seamless beginning to the new academic year at Saint Catherine Academy. “The staff has been extraordinary in their efforts to make adjustments and meet the needs of all of our students, both in-person as well as our remote learners,” said Eric Spencer, Director of Education.

The first day of school in Sr. Cheryl’s class began as each day always does, with an “Our Father” prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a discussion about what each student did over their summer vacation. Students shared how they enjoyed swimming, playing with the family dogs, and hanging out with siblings. “They are doing well recalling all the work they did last year,” said Sr. Cheryl. “And they are all so happy to be back and be with each other.” [View more photos from the first days of school](#)

We welcomed two new staff in Sr. Cheryl’s class. Sr. Marilyn Muldoon, OSU, returns to the Academy as a teacher. As the former (and first) principal of Saint Catherine Academy, she brings with her a familiarity with our programs, as well as 18 years of experience in special education. Rachel Downey joins us as a teaching assistant, with experience in multiple educational settings as a teacher and aftercare manager.

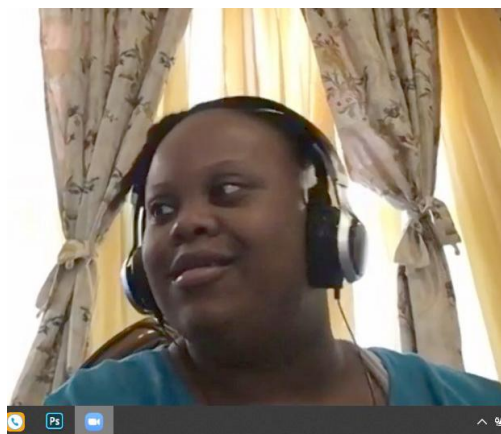
Two new students have joined Mrs. LaPorta’s class. Izzy (Israel), is 9 years old and enjoys watching anything with wheels, while Connor, 13, loves the alphabet and likes to make up a tune and sing the words that he is reading. Both are adapting to school routines and becoming familiar with the other students.

Mrs. LaPorta also hosts daily Zoom sessions in which students who are



attending virtually log in with the whole class. "We're finding many ways to connect, such as doing the daily calendar and talking about the season," she said. "They all really love singing together."

In Mrs. Loh's class students have been following the life cycle of a pumpkin. The seeds they planted at the beginning of summer school are flowering in the front school yard. "It's a great way for students to become familiar with how things grow," she said. "Hopefully we'll have some home-grown pumpkins by Halloween!"



## *Creative Ideas Abound*

A stuffed animal. A red shoe. An object smaller than a paperclip. Something green. A bike. On a recent afternoon in the Adult Program, each group was searching the Center for these and other items on the Scavenger Hunt list. Besides working together as a team, this was a fun activity for identifying different colors, sizes, textures, and objects of everyday life. Some individuals even took a different list home to scavenge for more items.



As activities in the community have been curtailed for the present time, staff in the Adult Program have come up with a multitude of creative ideas for projects and activities that are both fun and build skills. On walks to Lake Mohegan, participants have collected feathers and twigs to make mobiles, learning about birds and trees in the process. A string dipped in paint pulled between two pieces of paper yields a pair of beautiful abstract lilies. Paper plates cut in half with streamers can become cool-looking jelly fish. And everyone enjoyed making tie-dye t-shirts, choosing a pattern and colors, and sporting their unique creations when the shirts were finished.

"We didn't know we had so many artists on staff," said Brady Cronin, Director of the

## "Joy & Gratitude" Dinner Will Return Next Year



After carefully considering issues of safety and timing, the Board of Directors has decided to forego Saint Catherine Center's annual "Joy & Gratitude" Dinner this year. The special event had originally been scheduled for June 7 and was postponed to October 11 due to the pandemic.

Last year's event raised 15% of the Center's annual revenue, and while many generous donors contributed to the special COVID appeal in May, there will still be a significant shortfall. "We hope our supporters will be extra generous in response to our upcoming Annual Appeal to help us make up some of the funds we would have raised at the Dinner," said Helen Burland, Executive Director.

"We are blessed with a very loyal group of Saint Catherine Center supporters who love to gather in person at this event and celebrate our successes," she added. "We look forward to resuming this special evening next June."

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