



SAINT CATHERINE ACADEMY SPECIAL TIMES

Volume 6

Fall 2010

Where Learning
and Caring
Lead to
Personal Best

SAINT CATHERINE ACADEMY

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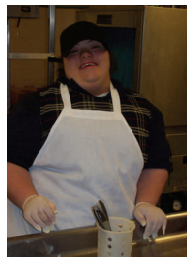
Saint Catherine Academy admits
students of any race, religion,
creed, national or ethnic origin.

EDUCATIONAL THEORY COMES TO LIFE OUR COMMUNITY BASED VOCATIONAL PROGRAM

Students at St. Catherine Academy experience a transition program that combines core academics with skill development. The goal is to encourage students to advocate for themselves and develop independent living skills. Educational theory comes to life in the form of our Community Based Vocational Program when students move from the classroom to a real work assignment.

James Barry, Mina Deorio and Joshua Kotos will have their first experience at R.C. Bigelow Tea. At this job site for students with varying abilities sort teas, package gift boxes, arrange baskets, make bows and interact with a small group of Bigelow employees. "It is a real confidence booster", says Sr. Eileen Boffa, vocational specialist at Saint Catherine Academy, "when the employees are so welcoming."

Fairfield University has offered our students several opportunities to gain real work experience in their Food Service operation. Last year, Jadea Rivera and Emily Gray sorted silverware and placed it in the canisters ready for the serving line. (see photo) This year, they will have an opportunity to interact with university students as they wipe down tables, refill salt and pepper shakers, sugar canisters and napkin containers. Both students excitedly gathered their hats ready for work.



Miguel Tomasso, owner of TACO LOCO Mexican Restaurant in Bridgeport worked personally with Adrian Barrabi and Kayla Miele last spring. Adrian headed to the kitchen to chop vegetables and meat and prepare tacos, burritos and rice and beans for the catering orders. He did such a good job that Miguel hired him to work this summer. "I learned so much from Mr. Tomasso. I really think I want to be a chef when I am older." (see photo) Kayla worked in the dining room, setting tables, and filling salsa



"We introduce different vocations to see what sparks each student's interest," says Sr. Eileen. "This gives the student the framework they need to handle that first work experience with confidence."

Our Business Partners

Friends in Education

Black Rock Food Pantry

Carolton Chronic Convalescent Hospital

The Catholic Center

Fairfield University—Sodexo Food Service

Marty's Pizza and More

Notre Dame High School

R.C. Bigelow Tea, Inc.

St. Ann's School

containers for takeout and catering orders. Both students will be heading to Notre Dame High School this fall for an academic experience, Adrian in Intro to Computers and Kayla in Spanish I coupled with a vocational experience that will include office related tasks and lunch.

St. Ann School in Bridgeport is a new site this year. Ariel will go weekly to help with their lunch distribution program. Once lunches are delivered to the school, Ariel will be sorting and counting so that the right lunches are delivered to the right classroom.

Three students will also be going to the Black Rock Food Pantry every week to help stock the shelves getting the food ready for Saturday distribution. The Food Pantry is now serving over 100 clients on Saturdays. This job site will allow several of our students to get a community based vocational experience that is developmentally appropriate.

The Community Based Vocational program is one aspect of Vocation Program. It is the culmination of several years of preparation that includes vocational skills taught using work box activities and in-house projects, such as completing invoice mailings for Bigelow Tea. Career Class is next in the curriculum sequence. Class topics related to attitude on the job, characteristics of a good employee and preparation for a job interview are interwoven with visiting job sites. "We introduce different vocations to see what sparks each student's interest," says Sr. Eileen. "This gives the student the framework they need to handle that first work experience with confidence."

The Vocational Program at Saint Catherine Academy is important to meeting our commitment to help these young people prepare for their own path to independence. The partnership with the business community is central to its success. "We provide the supervision and training at the job site and the business provides the opportunity for our students to succeed!", says Sr. Eileen. "We are grateful for our business partners."

A PARTNERSHIP FROM THE HEART

Saint Catherine Academy opened its new facility in October 2007 with significant financial support from members of the Order of Malta. While financial support remains important, in the fall of 2009, Jeanie Tisdale, area Chair of Malta and Helen Burland, President at Saint Catherine Academy set out to involve Dames and Knights in hands-on projects that allowed for personal connection to the ministry at Saint Catherine Academy. None of us could have predicted the overwhelming response we received.

The first initiative was launched in October 2008 and has become known as Peanut Butter and Jelly Fridays. Since its inception, four thousand five hundred peanut butter and jelly sandwiches have been made and delivered to Thomas Merton Center, a soup kitchen in Bridgeport, Connecticut that provides over 300 meals a day. Once a month, Malta volunteers bring 25 loaves of wheat bread, 225 ounces of peanut butter, 140 ounces of grape jelly and some elbow grease to assist Saint Catherine students and staff in making sandwiches. A full assembly line is formed with teams of students, staff and Malta volunteers handing out bread, spreading peanut butter and jelly, putting tops on sandwiches, cutting and bagging. When 250 sandwiches are done, everyone lets out a cheer! Then our Malta volunteers gather up the sandwiches and deliver them in time for lunch.

Judy Miller, volunteer coordinator of the PB & J project reports, "I had to turn people away; the interest was so strong. Once you've made sandwiches with the students, you want to go back again and again." Judy and several other volunteers have involved their families in the effort, which has an added benefit – our students get to work and socialize with volunteer peers. With the assistance of the Malta volunteers, the students have a chance to complete a real life community service project, and as a result of these efforts, the clients of Thomas Merton Center have a healthy lunch.



James and Wilson spread jelly onto sandwiches for Merton House.

Last spring, Saint Catherine Academy applied and received a grant from the Order of Malta to develop a library/media center. We had identified a missing piece in our academic program and discovered that many of the students had never visited a library. Using the same model as PB & J Friday, our goal was to provide real volunteer interaction with the students through a program that had been missing in the curriculum.

In the fall, Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama agreed to coordinate the volunteer effort. Each Friday, volunteers came to Saint Catherine and interact with the students around book choices. Since many of our students had never used a library before, we began by talking with them about reading for fun and using the library as a place to relax and look at books – a lifelong skill and benefit! It took some time for the concept to take hold but by December the students were looking forward to Fridays. When Tom Aylward returned after being away for two months, Joshua grinned and said, "I've missed you." Kelsey is always ready to give Virginia a big hug when she comes through the door. The volunteers have truly connected with these students and have impacted their lives.



Tommy and Bernie Rafferty, Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama and Kelsey spend a few minutes looking for the perfect book.

The latest partnership involved the annual "Duckie Derby" which took place on May 22, 2010 as over 1000 yellow rubber ducks raced down the Mill River in Fairfield. This fundraiser and friendraiser for Saint Catherine Academy was organized by Kelly Weldon and Liz Tamarkin. Kelly has recently joined the Advisory Board of Saint Catherine Academy and has taken the lead on this family day. The students participated by preparing "decorator ducks" under the guidance of Gina Barber, our volunteer art teacher.

The goal that was set in the fall of 2008 – to provide meaningful service opportunities for Dames and Knights has proven a benefit to all of the volunteers and the students of Saint Catherine Academy. We are excited about where this partnership will take us next.

Meet our New Board Members

Anthony (Tony) Minopoli is currently the Senior Vice President and Chief Investment Officer of the Knights of Columbus. In addition, he is an active member of St. Lawrence Parish in Shelton and a recent recipient of the Saint Augustine Medal. He serves on the Finance Committee of the SCA Advisory Board. Tony, his wife Karen and their children live in Shelton.

Kelly Luff Weldon joined SCA Advisory Board in March 2010. Kelly and her family have been steady and consistent supporters of the mission of SCA and were instrumental in establishing the new facility. As an active member of the CT Order of Malta, Kelly already leads by example in her commitment to serve the less fortunate. Kelly brings extensive experience with working with non profit organizations and an understanding of foundations. Her first activity for Saint Catherine Academy was to chair the 2010 Duckie Derby. Kelly, her husband Chris and their children live in Wilton.

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

“CELEBRATION OF SERVICE”

On a warm June evening under the tent at Fairfield University, friends of Saint Catherine Academy gathered to celebrate another successful year and to recognize the service of two couples, Gina and Al Barber and Jeanie and Tom Tisdale.



Tom and Jeanie Tisdale with Charles Chiusano, SCA Board Chair

In her introductory remarks, Nancy Matthews, Chancellor of the Diocese of Bridgeport, spoke, “These two couples exemplify the call to put your faith in action by leading others and serving themselves.”

Charles Chiusano recognized the event’s chairs, Chris Herman, member of the SCA Advisory Board and Nancy Fontana, a parent of a student at SCA. “These women and their terrific committee have worked for months to plan tonight’s dinner. We all are grateful for their efforts”.

The dinner is the primary fundraiser for the year and supports students at the Academy who otherwise would not have the financial resources to attend. Annual per student costs are in excess of \$40,000 and many of the students at SCA require some level of scholarship support.

At this year’s event, the attendees viewed a short film produced by Bill Lytton that featured Nancy Fontana and her story about the impact Saint Catherine Academy has had on her daughter, Kelsey and her family.

A live auction followed featuring art, sports tickets and a hand made quilt. Britta and Denis Nayden offered a \$50,000 scholarship matching challenge which was quickly met with generous donations from the Taylors and

Al Barber, in his role as auctioneer quickly turned the challenge back to the Naydens asking them to double their donation. Before the evening was complete, over \$250,000 had been raised.

Helen Burland, President, stated “we are so grateful for the amazing generosity of all of our supporters. We thank Fairfield University for hosting our event. I hope everyone had a wonderful evening and will be back next year—to continue our celebration of service.”



Charles Chiusano, Board Chair with Al and Gina Barber

The students and staff welcomed over 30 volunteers to a luncheon in April. It was our way of saying thank you to so many people who have helped us during the year. The students helped prepare the lunch and then celebrated with a song for the volunteers.



Helen Burland, President, welcomed the volunteers, “Our mission is to serve those students who are intellectually disabled. Our volunteers bring joy and compassion to Saint Catherine’s. Their time and talent help us extend our programs and enrich the lives of our students,” she said.



Fr. Jerry Ryle, Director of Campus Ministry at Sacred Heart University took time to explain the story of salvation to SCA students and staff when we visited last February. The students had studied mosaics with Gina Barber in art class. This trip was the culmination of this study and was funded by a grant from the Congregation of Notre Dame. The Chapel has several mosaics with hundreds of thousands of stone and glass pieces. The students were able to see first hand the beauty and intricacies of mosaics.

How does your Garden Grow?



Through the generosity of Sal and Marie Gilbertie, we purchased three raised planting beds last Spring and began our first garden project with several hundred pounds of soil and two dozen plants.

Throughout the spring and summer, students took turns watering from our rain barrel.

Finally, in September, we harvested eggplant, lettuce, carrots and beets. We have a close eye on one acorn squash with hopes of an early autumn harvest.

There is so much to be learned from gardening—and we are just beginning to recognize some of the potential lessons—from science, to recycling, to cooking...stayed tuned for more on this topic... Anyone interested in working with us should contact Helen Burland at 203-540-5381 x 2010.



Save the Date

The Future is Now Concert

October 23, 2010

8:00 PM

Christmas Pageant

December 23, 2010

10:00 am

Duckie Derby

May 21, 2011

Annual Scholarship

Dinner

June 12, 2011

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Duckie Derby 2010

On a sunny May afternoon, more than 1,000 yellow rubber ducks raced down the Mill River in Fairfield, CT. Over 400 spectators cheered on their ducks as they made their way to the finish line. When the race was over, Sr. Robert Marie and Sr. Henry of Trumbull held the winning number!

The Duckie Derby 2010 brought together families and friends in support of Saint Catherine Academy. This year's Derby, chaired by Kelly Luff Weldon and Liz Tamarkin, raised over \$11,000 to add to the library/media center at Saint Catherine Academy. Kelly states, "what makes this fundraiser so special is that it caters to families. People of all ages are able to have fun."

The students from Saint Catherine got to participate by decorating designer ducks with the help of Gina Barber, SCA's art teacher. The Bank of Fairfield sponsored this event and has committed to Duckie Derby 2011. For more information and photos go to www.duckiederbyday2010.blogspot.com.

The Duck Decorating contest Winners

Category	10 and Under	11 and Older
Best Dressed	Ruby Fortman "LULU"	McCalay Debryza "ABBY"
Most Original	Noah Beiger "MARDI GRAS"	Andrew Aoyama "DUCK TAPE"
Judge's Choice	Caitlyn Mitchell "HAWAII DUCK O"	Bridget and Alana Murphy "DUCKIES IN SPACE"
Best in Show	Mason Coudert "THOMAS THE TANK DUCK"	Erin Bronner "OLYMPIC DUCK"



Students with Kelly Weldon, Helen Burland, Bob Hojanacki of the Bank of Fairfield and Gina Barber display their designer ducks.

Saint Catherine Academy is a private, state-approved school of the Diocese of Bridgeport serving students with special needs. We offer an education program for students who are ages five to twenty-one years old with multiple disabilities including intellectual disabilities and other developmental disorders.