



The Education Experience

at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

The Turtle and the Hare

Dear Friends:

You know the story. The turtle with methodical dedication ends up winning the race against the foolish and impatient rabbit that bounces around, wasting his time and energy. In writing this letter to you, it struck me how especially relevant this story is for the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center. By understanding the road in front of us, our team recognizes that steady progress is how we will win the race for our community.

To start the journey, we understand that 98.7% of our students test below grade level when they come to us. More often than not, this means more than one grade. So in order to accomplish their goals, our students must first learn that they have to make up that ground before they can move on to the finish line. Patience is sometimes a hard lesson to learn, as many of them want to sprint to the end result.

But our staff and volunteers work hard to impress upon all of our students, children and adults alike, that by taking the time to truly learn their subjects, they will have the tools they need as the road becomes more difficult. Something as seemingly simple as really learning multiplication tables makes division, geometry and algebra so much easier. It may take longer, but the results are worthwhile.

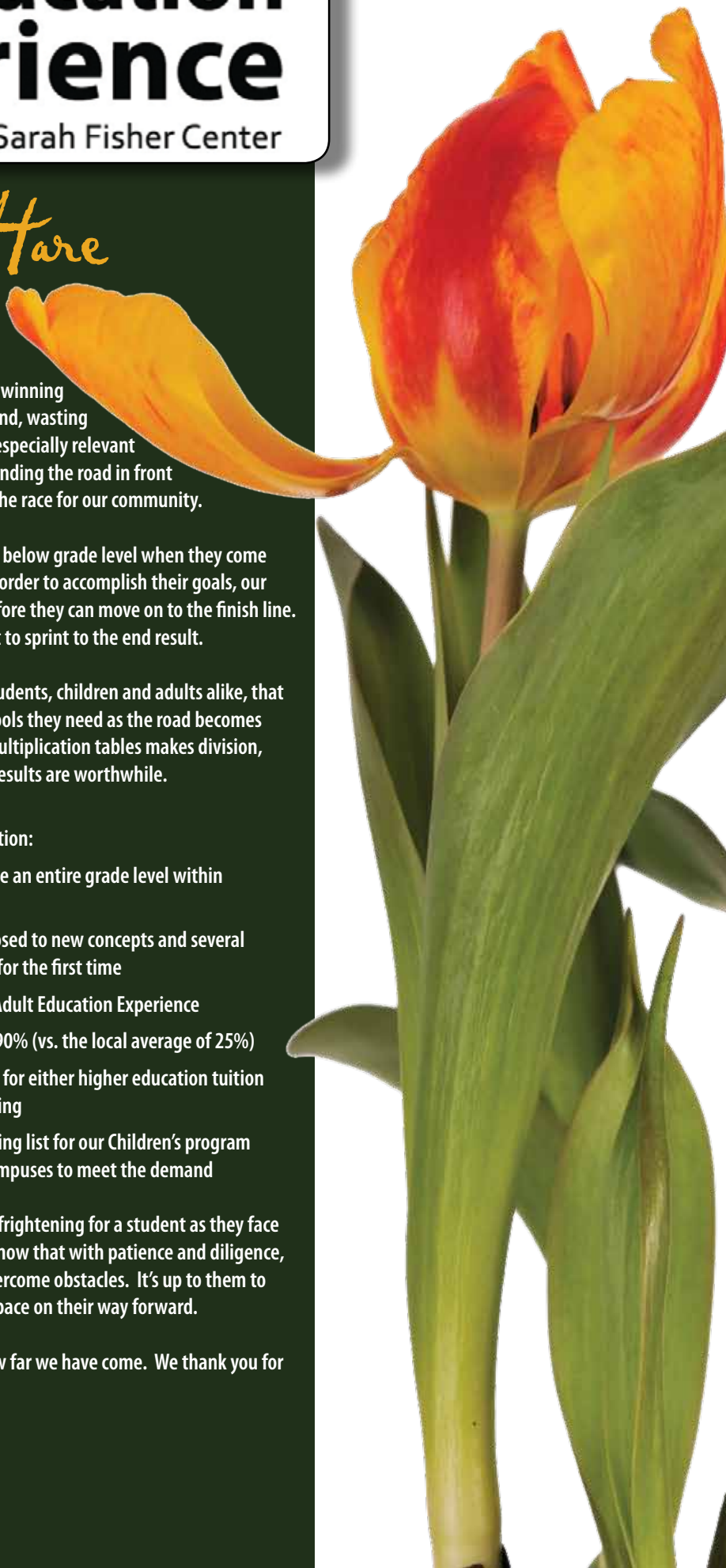
In 2012, we saw the results of our systematic approach come to fruition:

- Our Children's Education Experience saw the average child rise an entire grade level within 6 months
- The children also entered their new school year, already exposed to new concepts and several that had been "behind", joined the honor roll for their grade for the first time
- We more than doubled the number of GED graduates in the Adult Education Experience
- First-time pass rates for all segments of the GED test rose to 90% (vs. the local average of 25%)
- 100% of our graduating adults were provided with resources for either higher education tuition assistance, job search assistance or access to vocational training
- Our enrollment is at an all-time high and there is now a waiting list for our Children's program and in 2013, we will be adding more sessions to our adult campuses to meet the demand

The road of education can have many twists and can sometimes be frightening for a student as they face unknown barriers. But like the Turtle, we make sure our students know that with patience and diligence, they will reach their goals. They know we are here to help them overcome obstacles. It's up to them to reach the finish line, but like a good coach, we are here to set their pace on their way forward.

Looking back over the path we traveled in 2012, we can see just how far we have come. We thank you for walking with us.

Diane Renaud
Executive Director/CEO





April is Volunteer Appreciation Month!

The Center wouldn't exist without the tremendous support of our volunteers. As you have seen throughout this newsletter, we have a variety of friends that support us in different ways. This year, we are happy to host our first Volunteer Appreciation event in April, to thank and celebrate the extraordinary effort of some very special people.

5 Year Club

A special thank you to those that are celebrating five years of service to the Center: **Steve Dunbar, John Goulette, Bob Kuhr, Andy and Barb Zarow**

Volunteer of the Year – Luella Jahsan

This year, we are adding a new celebration, to recognize one special volunteer that has made a big difference for the Center and its students. All of our volunteers are important to us, but we would like to highlight the exceptional commitment of a devoted friend of the Center.

Luella has been a volunteer with the Center since 2009. A retired teacher, she works with our adult students in the GED program and has been a tremendous asset to the Center. She volunteers two evenings and an entire day each week, as well as helping with our May Day event and the Children's program. Luella has filled an essential gap in our adult program, which our budget simply does not allow us to cover. It is with Luella's devotion that we are able to serve so many students in our evening classes and we are grateful for her enduring loyalty.

Students Helping Students

Once again this year, the Center has been very fortunate to receive a significant amount of support from students at institutions of higher education. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the students and administrations of these organizations for tutoring our students and enabling us to broaden our reach:

Eastern Michigan University
Henry Ford Community College
Madonna University
Marygrove University

Oakland University
University of Michigan
Washtenaw Community College
Wayne State University



Wayne State University students working with our children in the after-school program.

Tutoring is not the only way that students have been helping our students. We welcome ideas for unique ways that students can learn more about their chosen area of study while helping others:

Madonna University's Nutrition Network helped to complete the renovation and construction of our Children's Urban Garden, while their Broadcast and Cinema Arts students included the Center in two film projects: Pay It Forward and featuring St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center on their half hour television show, Celebrate Michigan!

Wayne State University's students assisted the Center in unique ways with innovative projects including an engineering student that assisted with space planning and this semester an anthropology student who will be conducting a generational and cultural study with our adult students.

But University students are not the only ones who donate their time and efforts to the Center. **Deborah Tisdell** brought her daughters to volunteer during the Children's Summer Education Experience. She "wanted to be a role model for the girls, by teaching them the importance of giving back to the community by sharing and appreciating their blessings." **Erin**, a freshman and **Megan**, a junior at U of D/Mercy High School not only spent the summer with the children, but continued volunteering each week with their mom, even after they returned to school themselves. By working with at-risk children, "my daughters have heard some of their stories and they have learned to have more compassion for those that are less fortunate."

Thank you! We couldn't do it without you!

We need your help! Please consider volunteering – we have a variety of ways you can support the Center and our Community. Contact Sr. Marie Judith Haupt at (313) 535-9200 x3104 or visit www.svsfcenter.org for more information.

Goodbye and Hello

We wish to acknowledge the years of service of **Robert Asmussen**, who has stepped down from our Board of Trustees. Bob continues to support the Center through his service on the Corporate and Investment Committees and has been a tremendous force in the Center's drive to make a true impact upon the community. Thank you Bob, for all that you have done and all that you still do!

In March, we welcomed a new member to the Board of Trustees, **Kelley Vivyan**. Kelley has been a devoted volunteer for our children's services and is passionate about the Center's mission and vision for the future. The owner of Beyond Salon in Farmington, Kelley has already brought endless amounts of energy, ideas and connections to the Center. Welcome to the Board Kelley!

Sr. Theresa Sullivan, who has been a faithful member of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Family for over 13 years, has relocated to the Chicago area and as a result, has relinquished her role on the Corporate Committee. Her passion for our mission of serving others has been a tremendous asset as the Center has evolved and our gratitude is beyond measure. We wish Sister Theresa all the best!

Elizabeth Ottaway, who is the Chair of the Center's Investment Committee, has led the way in enabling our Center to move forward, as we build our fundraising program. Liz has graciously agreed to step up again, by assuming Sister Theresa's role on the Corporate Committee. Liz, we are grateful for your additional support!

Some of our Students

India

A letter to the Center from one of our GED graduates:

"The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center has changed my life! A close friend recommended that I join the program. I'm so glad I did! I've been struggling with the GED math test for years, but I was finally able to pass the math portion because of the tutors at this school. They were always available and willing to help me in the areas I was struggling. After I received my GED, I enrolled in college. I'm studying Nursing and plan to get my Associates Degree. I want to be an inspiration to others. This program has helped me to realize that. I will recommend this program to all my family and friends. Thanks so much to all of the tutors at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center!"

Natalie

Natalie is one of the Center's recent GED graduates, who passed all five segments of the GED on her first attempt. Upon graduation, the students come to the Center to receive their certificate and have their "graduation" picture taken. When Natalie visited the Center, she received her certificate, then crossed the hall and signed up to be a math tutor. We could not be more delighted to welcome Natalie!

easy ways to Help make a **Change**

It's easy to be part of all of the positive changes in the Center and help in ways you may not have considered before.

Like us on Facebook! 

Facebook is a wonderful way to stay connected to all of the announcements and activities of the Center. Help us expand our social network by "liking" us!

SVSFC has enrolled with **Charity Motors** to help change the shape of our community through education. When you donate your vehicle, you can designate the proceeds to the Center. Visit www.charitymotors.org for more information.



Ask your employer – Does your employer have an Employee Giving/Matching Gift program? A volunteer group? Give grants to non-profits? Or are there employee activities such as a jean day that raise money? Ask how St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center can be included.

Check with your place of worship – many faith communities have funds that they designate to community efforts.

Monetary donations - We rely on donations to operate. Your contribution is not only tax-deductible, it also directly supports our programs. Your gift will help our kids to succeed in school and make our adults more employable, which has economic impact for our entire community – both now and in the future. We are able to accept secure donations on our website too!

In-kind - Visit our website at www.svsfcenter.org – We have a variety of needs. Something as simple as a roll of paper towel or batteries can help off-set operating costs.

United Way designation – If you or your company participate in the annual United Way campaign, you can designate your gift toward The Education Experience at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center.

Volunteer – It doesn't take a lot of time to make a difference. And we have a variety of ways that you can help. Whether it is tutoring, child care, administrative assistance, or publicity and marketing, your assistance is appreciated.

Call us at (313) 535-9200 or visit www.svsfcenter.org and learn more about how you can contribute to change.

New Downtown Location and Partner

SVSFC is delighted to welcome a new partner to the family, the Detroit Public Library. When our existing Downtown Detroit location was closed, we looked to the DPL to help us continue to provide services in the Downtown area, because of their commitment to literacy in Detroit. They responded enthusiastically and have provided a wonderful new learning environment for our Downtown students. Joel Anyim, Skillman Branch Manager, has been a passionate and supportive partner. Thanks Joel!



St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

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**For more information, please call us at (313) 535-9200
or visit www.svsfcenter.org**



Our Mission -

We provide educational programs, basic skill building and academic enhancement for at-risk children and adults, designed to build self-sufficiency skills for academic and employment success, personal achievement and dignity.

Our beloved Ms. Jackie, who is one of our most dedicated children's program volunteers. Day after day, year after year, her devotion is unwavering.