



The Education Experience

at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

Springing Forward!

Dear Friends:

Welcome to Spring! Like everyone else, our winter was long, cold, and snowy - but productive! The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center spent the winter reinventing itself and has a new look, new services and our team is delighted to update you on all of our exciting growth. There is so much to tell you!

But first, I feel it is important to let you know about my first six months at the Center. When I accepted this position, I was happy to become part of a team that has served Southeastern Michigan for almost 170 years. I had no idea what I was in for - and I couldn't be more grateful! It has been a humbling experience, to work with such an extraordinary group of people - staff, volunteers and donors alike - who have dedicated themselves to helping at-risk children and adults.

I have learned first-hand of the tremendous need for this service in our community (and as a result, the wisdom of the Board of Trustees to anticipate how critical this service would become). Returning to the roots of the mission that the Daughters of Charity started so long ago - education - is essential in helping to turn Southeastern Michigan around.

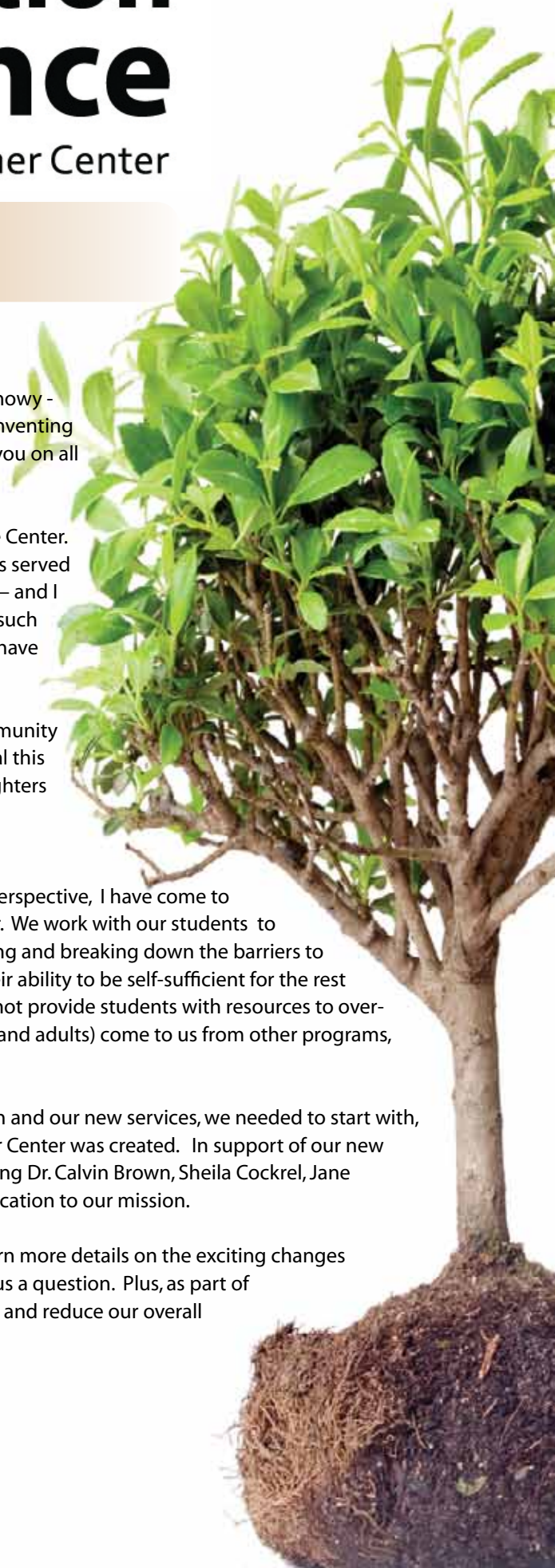
Due to the fact that our team is approaching education from a social work perspective, I have come to realize that we have a truly unique "education experience" here at the Center. We work with our students to recognize what really is preventing them from moving forward. By identifying and breaking down the barriers to education, we provide our students with skills that will ultimately lead to their ability to be self-sufficient for the rest of their lives. Other after-school, summer and adult education programs do not provide students with resources to overcome obstacles. Which may be why so many of our students (both children and adults) come to us from other programs, who have simply not met their needs.

As a result, we decided that to increase awareness of our reborn organization and our new services, we needed to start with a new image....and The Education Experience at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center was created. In support of our new direction, the Board of Trustees has welcomed several new members, including Dr. Calvin Brown, Sheila Cockrel, Jane Perczyk, and Christianne Sims. We are grateful for their enthusiasm and dedication to our mission.

We strongly encourage you to visit our website at www.svsfcenter.org to learn more details on the exciting changes we've been making. It's also a fast and easy way to volunteer, donate or ask us a question. Plus, as part of our overall cost-cutting program in 2011, you can help us to save some trees and reduce our overall costs, by signing up to receive your newsletter via email!

Wishing you a wonderful season of rebirth,

Diane Renaud
Executive Director/CEO





What have we been up to?

As the weather warms, it is natural for our thoughts to turn to experiences that many of us have had, such as summer vacation, family trips, graduation, getting ready for college, etc. Unfortunately, for the majority of our students, these are not options they are able to enjoy. Approximately 50% of the households we serve, don't have adequate utilities, transportation, food or clothing - much less internet, home computers and other tools they need for the children to keep up in school or adults to be able to competitively look for work.

The neighborhoods we serve face the lowest test-scores, highest drop-out and unemployment rates in Michigan. To address those challenges, we have developed new services that speak directly to the needs of our students and we want you to know about how we are expanding.

Children's Education Experience

Serving More Schools - Our Children's after-school and summer programs were a good start. However, we saw the need to broaden the reach of these programs and make them available to more children, especially as challenges continue to exist for public schools. As a result, we have expanded our reach to more elementary schools in the area surrounding the center, as well as developing alliances with neighborhood groups, to increase awareness of the Center and our services.

Children's Learning Lab - The ability to adapt to computer learning is of growing importance. Many of the children we serve do not have access to computers in their home and as a result, there are behind their peers that live only a few miles away. The Center has undergone a technology upgrade, including the implementation of a new computer Learning Lab. And thanks to a gift from St. Kenneth's Catholic Church's Christian Services, we are able to install new learning programs, providing our kids with an expanded educational experience.

Free Transportation - Recognizing the challenges for our after-school children to be able to come to the Center safely and quickly, we have implemented a new transportation system. Now, it is easier for our kids and their parents to focus on what is important - the learning.

Summer Field Trips - We are absolutely delighted to be able to add a new educational and experiential component to our Children's Summer Learning Program. Due to the generosity of the Marc Suris Legacy Foundation, who has graciously sponsored these new trips, we will now be taking our summer students to visit landmark locations that they would not ordinarily have the opportunity to visit. Our kids will be able to experience the Detroit Science Center, Greenfield Village and the Detroit Institute of Arts, just to name a few.



Family Resources - Through our relationships with other agencies and corporations, we have developed a central information center available to all of our students and their families, with resources for assistance. These services include insurance for children, utilities, food banks, and other social services.



Adult Education Experience

Success Rates and Math - As part of assessing our future, we took a look at our past and what we have really been providing to our adult students. In addition to learning that we are already at the forefront of best practices, as recommended by the Department of Education, we learned that our success rates are exceptional.

The GED consists of five separate tests. The average student taking the test the first time, passes all five segments only **25%** of the time. Our students pass all five segments an average of **80%** on their first try and **94%** of our students pass four out of five segments. Due to the fact that math is the hardest segment, we have implemented specific math sessions, so that our students can finish testing faster and become viable employment candidates sooner.

Night Sessions - In an effort to provide greater access to our students, we now offer evening sessions and our students and volunteers have been very receptive.

Continuing Education Lectures - For many of our students, once they have been empowered by obtaining their GED, they have the motivation to continue their education. To keep this momentum going, we have begun a quarterly lecture series with local higher education organizations. Our guest schools provide information on lines of study, admission requirements, scholarships and financial aid. Following the lectures, we provide transportation to the campus for guided tours.

Career/College Corner - To further support our adult students and their next step, we have launched another new service. We help students create resumes and cover letters, apply to college, look for work and learn interview tips. We feel it is vital to keep supporting our alumni, as they work toward become more self-sustaining and contributing members of our neighborhoods.





Downtown Campus at Friend of the Court – As part of our ongoing effort to develop partnerships, expanding awareness and reach of our programs, we have developed an outstanding relationship with Friend of the Court, as their official GED partner. They provide our service information to their clients, in an effort to assist parents with their ability to financially support their families. They have also granted us with a free location in Downtown Detroit, in order to bring the services to parents, as they are resolving their support cases. Finally, they have provided the Center with a specially appointed liaison for Friend of the Court, so that we can help our students (at both campuses) with meeting their obligations.

We need your help to Spread the Word!

The staff and volunteers of the Center are getting out and about, making sure that the public knows we are still here, still strong and providing truly needed assistance. A couple of examples of what we've been up to are:

- Gallery Animato, hosted a free open house to view a portion of the beautiful stained glass windows of the original residence, built in 1929. It was a lovely reunion of past residents, volunteers and staff.
- The other windows were on display for the month of April at Canton Village Theater. *Special thanks to Tom Newton for all of his efforts with both organizations and for his restoration of the windows and preserving the legacy of Charles and Sarah Fisher.*
- Some of our young students marched in the annual May Day Parade in celebration of Brightmoor Week, promoting open enrollment for our Children's Summer Learning Program.



We need your help to spread the word about where we are and what we are doing. It is important to make sure the residents of Southeastern Michigan understand that our legacy of 170 years of service is still going strong.

One way to help is if you, family or friends participate on Facebook or LinkedIn, we strongly encourage looking us up and "Friending" us. That way, you will get the up to the minute information on our activities and opportunities. And we have registered the Center with a variety of organizations that recruit volunteers from around the Metro-Detroit area. With all of our new services, there are more ways to volunteer and donate than ever before.



Please help us expand our ability to serve the needs of our neighbors and encourage those you know to look us up!



GIVE AND GROW!

As you can see, we have a lot going on. In addition to our new services and outreach, we have also streamlined costs, improved technology to be more efficient and environmentally responsible, recruited new volunteers, partnerships and students.

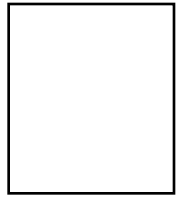
Our enrollment is increasing and we are helping more students to reach their full potential and contribute to the revitalization of Southeastern Michigan. We are excited about our future, but we have financial challenges that will affect our ability to supply critically needed services to our community. We need your help.

Your donation will provide children with a chance to learn their way to a better life. To help them read, write and acquire the basic skills they need now – in order to avoid falling into the habit of being behind academically for the rest of their lives...and avoid becoming GED students as adults.

Your donation will provide adults with the ability to obtain employment for which they were previously ineligible. By helping them to acquire their GED, move towards higher education or vocation training, and learn how to look for work, you enable our adult students to support their families, reducing the strain on the state's economy, by adding to the tax base.

Your donation now will make a difference for generations to come.





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**For more information,
please call us at (313) 535-9200.**

Our Mission - We will provide education offerings, basic skill building and academic enhancement for at risk children and adults, designer to help build self-sufficiency skills for academic and employment success, personal achievement and dignity.

Our Values - The values of our founders continue to guide the expression of the Center's mission:

Simplicity - Honesty, integrity and openness in all of our words and actions

Teamwork - Working together in service to others

Advocacy - Advocating for those with no voice

Inventiveness - Being creative in everything we do

Respect - Showing respect for those we serve and everyone we contact on their behalf

Service Quality - Providing the highest quality services

