
svsf St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

SPRING 2015

The Inspiration

Dear Friends,

My father once told me, "If you believe in what you are doing, it isn't work." Those words have inspired me over many hurdles. Detroit's bankruptcy and economic challenges have been hurdles affecting all of us in Southeastern Michigan in different ways, but at St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, those words are still inspiring. We are privileged to see and be a part of efforts to meet many of those challenges head on. Through these efforts, we gained strength and resolution to be part of the solutions that are so desperately needed.

The Center had many things to celebrate in 2014, including our 170th Anniversary, our *Windows of Opportunity Exhibit* and being honored as a "2014 Best of Michigan Non-Profit Beacon" by the Michigan Business Professional's Association. During the Holiday Season alone, our students and families benefited from the incredibly generous hearts of the long-time supporters such as *Comerica, Eastown Distributors, Blue Care Network and St. Regis Catholic Church*. We also welcomed new friends, such as *Ghafari and Associates*.

At the same time, we saw our students face greater challenges. We saw that these hurdles give our students the hardest job of all. They are the ones that, even with more obstacles put in their way, are working to change their lives. The barriers that they face are things that many people don't necessarily realize are obstacles.

A lot of us aren't affected if a bus doesn't run. But it can turn the life of our students upside down. Many people don't think twice about how the common core standards (that are now mandated in schools) can set a troubled district back even further, making its students even less likely to succeed in their struggle to rise up out of an at-risk community. While many parents are helping their children to apply to college, they don't necessarily realize that the new GED has created an entire segment of adults that cannot get a job, perpetuating some of the hard issues that Metro Detroit faces.

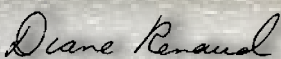
The results of the new national GED test are in and frankly, they are dismal. The price increased and it is completely computerized, which is a challenge for the disenfranchised to take a timed test on a computer when the idea of a home computer, laptop, ipad or tablet is not in their reality. But more than that, the difficulty of the test increased significantly, so those that take the GED are "college ready", in alignment with the common core standards. **This resulted in a national drop of people passing the GED of almost 90% in 2014!** (If you tried our kiosk at our Exhibit, you know just how hard it is!) Even those that graduated from high school in 2013 are unlikely to pass the new test.

The difficulty that this presents is that in order to pass the new GED test, an additional period of study must be put in, which we've seen has added an average of up to a year of preparation. So, ask yourself this: If you have to prepare to take a test for two years, because your school system didn't prepare you and you can't get a job because you now have to pass the GED first...how are you going to support yourself and/or your family?

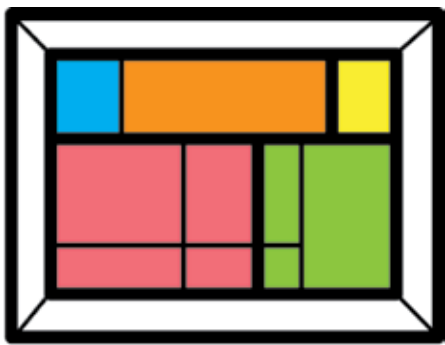
Yes, this is a challenge. But it is also an inspiration, because through our team of volunteers, supporters and community partners, we are able to reach farther, making in-roads into public policy efforts that are helping us to find new ways to support our students. Our inspiration is reinforced by the incomparable contribution of every single individual that gives an hour, a dollar or is an advocate of education, to keep us moving our students forward. Our Team and Board of Trustees are so grateful for the enormous support that the Center received in the past year from friends, donors, volunteers and of course, the community.

Dad was right. Thanks to your help, 2015 won't be a series of hurdles. It will be the opportunity to inspire.

Yours,



Diane Renaud
Executive Director/CEO



Windows of Opportunity Wrap-up

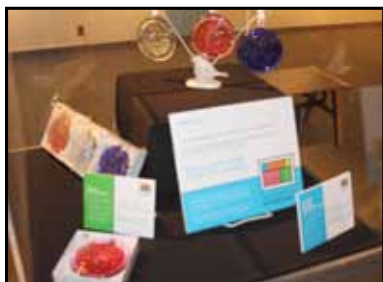
The Center's Windows of Opportunity promotion (held from October through December at the Detroit Historical Museum), was a tremendous success. Thousands of guests visited our exhibit. They experienced not only our historic stained glass windows, but also learned more about our organization's history and what we are doing to support families in Metro-Detroit through education. More than 500 people tested their knowledge through our interactive GED kiosk, discovering first-hand how difficult the new GED test is and why our services are so needed.

For those of you that were unable to visit the exhibit, you can still experience it by visiting our virtual tour on the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center channel on youtube.com. There you can see not only our exhibit, but also a video about "What We Do" at SVSF and some other videos that were part of the Windows promotion.

"Win a Window" Contest Winner



Jenny Geiger - *"I was excited to win this beautiful window reproduction done by a Michigan artist. As someone who has volunteered at SVSF, I enjoyed the Windows of Opportunity exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum and how it explains the difference they are making in education for our community."*



Retail Partners

Thanks to our Retail Partners who sold our special calendars, cards and ornaments: Beyond Salon, Koueiter Jewelers, The League Shop, and the Detroit Historical

Museum Gift Shop. And a special thank you to Pat Brinker at The League Shop in Grosse Pointe, for the lovely reception, which celebrated our exhibit and items!

Students Helping Students

Every year, we are grateful to our partners in education for their enthusiastic support of need for student volunteers. SVSF welcomed students from **Catholic Central, Marian High School, Brother Rice, Cranbrook** and **Mercy High Schools** who have donated their time to working with our kids.



Madonna University hosted 5 students for a tour through their Science labs.

But not to be outdone by the teenagers, our friends in higher education answered the call for help resoundingly too! We welcomed students from all areas of study including psychology, sociology, social work, education, math and engineering just to name a few. Our deepest thanks to **Madonna University, Marygrove College, University of Michigan (both Ann Arbor/Detroit Partnership program and Dearborn campuses), and Wayne State University.** We appreciate not only the students, but also their advisors and teachers for making this possible!

We also wish to acknowledge our amazing interns whose dedication has helped the Center and its students in immeasurable ways: Shantael Harbin, Juan Johnson, Minga Perkins, Steven Sledge, and Salina Smith.

Finally, we want to say a very special thank you to **Olga Martinez**, who was instrumental in the enormously successful partnership the Center has with Madonna University. Olga was responsible for engaging a variety of departments within the University to support our programs and we will never be able to thank her enough for all she has done!

20 Years and Counting



Rev. Steve thankful for the weekly staff meeting.

It is our great pleasure to honor a special man, who has been an integral part of the Center's history and is celebrating his 20th Anniversary in March. Steve Goodrum, Director of Adult Education, was the co-creator of our Adult GED Program and manages all of our extension campuses. An ordained minister, Steve ran the Young Fatherhood Initiative at our former location, is a founding member of the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition and a social worker. He served on the State of Michigan GED Task Force through the Department of Education, to help us navigate the changing test. He has been a steadfast force at the Center, serving as an inspiration to all those that have the pleasure to work with him. He has been told that will never be allowed to retire.

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APRIL is... Volunteer Appreciation Month!

2015 Volunteer of the Year - David Kuziemko

A resident of Sterling Heights, David is an active volunteer in his community. He started volunteering with SVSF in 2012, as a GED program volunteer at our Central Campus to help tutor Detroit adults striving towards a better education and more stable employment. He tells the Center that "It gives me a warm satisfaction to help students who have decided that they want to improve themselves."



David Kuziemko

SVSF is honored to have such a dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer. Thank you for the difference you are making David!

Congratulations Sister Xavier!



Sister Xavier Ballance

Special congratulations to a long-time member of our Board of Trustees, Sister Xavier Ballance (DC), who was honored by St. John Providence Hospital in Southfield. The Heart Institute Auditorium was renamed after Sister Xavier because she has been "the heart of the hospital" for many years. The building is now known as the Sister Xavier Ballance (DC) Heart Institute Conference Center. Sister has been in the "heart" of SVSF for many years and we are delighted to share this wonderful news!

Welcome Melissa Gush!

SVSF is thrilled to welcome Melissa as the newest addition to our Children's Program. Melissa originally came to the Center as a Social Work intern through Madonna University and her devotion to our kids made quite an impact on us. We are delighted to have her join the family and she has already become a vital and valued member!



Melissa Gush

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



Follow us on Twitter

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!



Charity Motors - Donate your vehicle and you can designate the proceeds to the SVSF. 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.

Designate us for Busch and Kroger Community Rewards programs - log on to their websites and select St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center to receive a donation from your grocery shopping.

Leave a Legacy - Consider St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in your estate planning, to leave a gift that keeps on giving. We can help. Call Nancy Skula at (313) 535-9200, extension 3110.

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 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, 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.

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 Beth Kraft at (313) 535-9200 x3104 or visit www.svsfcenter.org for more information.

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.

SVSF wishes to thank to Eastown Distributors for bringing a special visitor to the Children's Afterschool Program in 2014. But Eastown and its employees provide magnificent support to our children all year long too! In 2014, they also fixed a badly leaking roof in the Children's wing, as well as funding a new Children's Courtyard and landscaping!