

Oh No! MY BATTERY IS DEAD!

Dear Friends:

How many of us have uttered this chilling phrase? It used to be you only heard this when people headed out to their cars, or when your Dad looked at his watch. Then as technology progressed, it became portable radios, toothbrushes, household equipment, walkmen, then pagers, laptops, cell phones, and a whole host of other electronics. Civilization has come a long way and invented some truly amazing things, designed for our ease and entertainment.

As a result, we have become so focused upon this important element of life that entire industries have been created and school curricula have been changed to accommodate power and technology. We can't imagine a life without voltage and when the power is off, life comes to a halt. People panic, getting frustrated trying to figure out how to get a portable charger for their cell phones, to find an app to tell them when the power is going to come back on. So that they can retreat into their own technology cocoons again.

The irony is that as we push our kids to focus upon STEM skills, it is often overlooked that they already possess all the power they need. Their brain. It possess electrical impulses surging through their synapsis, charging a battery that is constantly in use. The brain is the battery that has started to become limited by not learning how to read, except for scanning headlines on search engines and not for pleasure or expanded knowledge. Understanding spelling, syntax, grammar, and learning how to translate solid reading skills into good writing skills or speaking eloquently are quickly becoming lost arts. Advertising and social media celebrate errors in language, in order to gain the most followers and become a viral success.

Now I'm not saying that spell-check hasn't saved me a few times. But it takes hard work to use that miracle of a battery that is our brains – to fill it, to train it and to not retreat behind a screen that lights up. And it's called work for a reason. It takes effort to use your brain, earn a living, contribute to society and ensure that the next generation inherits values we hold dear, including a work ethic. It requires commitment to keep that battery running. At St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, we are deeply gratified when someone's work ethic and belief in education powers them up for a better future.

Such is the case of one of our Adult Graduates, Cyrus Nobel. Cyrus came to SVSF Center in 2011 for tutoring to complete his GED. He hadn't finished school because he didn't really have a mentor, who encouraged him to realize that school was important. With us, he learned to push "the noise" out of his mind and focus, not only completing his GED, but also obtaining an Associate and ultimately a Bachelor Degree in Mechanical Engineering. Today he is a Plant Engineer with Gage Products.

Cyrus is a great example of someone who understood that his brain is a miracle of technology and has unlimited capacity. He worked hard to keep the flow of energy moving to propel him forward and look what he has accomplished. Much more than looking for a place to plug in his electronics to be re-charged.

For future generations to obtain STEM skills, they first have to learn how to read. Then they can participate in the vast world of technology. But if you want to know the secret to real power, it all starts with appreciating your raw materials - the always charging battery that is your brain. Pass it on.

Best regards,



Diane Renaud, Executive Director/CEO

P.S. Literally the day that I wrote this newsletter, our server crashed and our email went down. How is that for karma?





Passing the Torch

GOODBYE MS. JESSICA!



Our beloved **Jessica Chapman** has left us and the Children's Program, practicing what we preach, by pursuing her Master's Degree. We miss her smile and the warm understanding she provided to the kids, but we are proud of her pursuing her dreams! Thank you for invaluable contributions Ms. Jessica!

WELCOME DYNAMIC DUO!

Last year, we were blessed to have two extraordinary year-long interns, who were pursuing their MSW's through Wayne State University. As we learned of Ms. Jessica's departure, **Harmony Bell** had just completed

her studies and we were delighted to bring Harmony's infectious laughter and devotion to the Center as the new Children's Program Coordinator. She has been a tremendous addition to our team, specializing in working with our 1st and 2nd graders and the children adore their Ms. Harmony.



Charnaë Keith, who we were also very fortunate to hire right after her graduation, has the same "can-do" and positive spirit and strong work ethic. She has jumped right in as our Adult Education Manager and is managing our East and New Center campuses, providing critical support to our Center campus and is an overall significant contributor in our Adult Program.

Both of these women have filled important roles in our programs and have become valued team members. We are blessed to have them and know that our students will not only reach their goals with their help, but also be better for knowing each of them.

Valuable Volunteers!

SVSF was invited to provide a special accelerated learning program to prospective DTE Energy Employees by the Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC), who facilitates workforce development programs for the City of Detroit. These special students participated in an intensive, two-week study program to bring up their reading and math skills in order to become DTE employees. The program was very successful, thanks to the devotion of four very talented and motivating volunteers. We would not be able to participate in such key initiatives were it not for exceptional people like **David Camilleri, George Perdue, Luella Jahsan, and Jack Mills** (*absent from the photo*) who went beyond the call of duty to help provide the personalized tutoring that makes our program so successful! Through their efforts, in two short weeks, these students increased their reading levels by an average of one grade and increased their abilities by an average of two grade levels.

WOW!



THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!



In 2013, the Center launched its own Children's Urban Garden, where children help to plant, nurture and harvest vegetables. Children take their harvested vegetables home and are encouraged to plant their own garden with their family.

This Summer, with the gracious support of **The David W. Elliott Memorial Foundation**, this Garden has evolved into the **SVSF Center's Children's Healthy Habits Program**. Part of the program is a cookbook, dedicated to the memory of David W. Elliott, who was a long-time supporter of St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center. Mr. Elliott supported the Center in a variety of ways for many years, beginning with our location in Farmington Hills and following the Center through its evolution and relocation back to Detroit. His commitment to children and families never diminished.

Sadly, Mr. Elliott passed away in 2011, but it was his dream to ensure that even after he was gone, SVSF Center would still receive support for the children that we serve. As a result, The David W. Elliott Memorial Foundation has honored Mr. Elliott with sponsoring this cookbook to promote healthy eating habits to combat child obesity and diabetes, issues that were close to his heart. The program aims to:

- ✓ Develop knowledge of healthy eating and the importance of good nutrition
- ✓ Educate children about good health by providing them with the skills and support needed to adopt long-term, healthy behaviors
- ✓ Promote Physical Fitness

Thank You to the **David W. Elliott Memorial Foundation!**

Extraordinary Example

Maurine Stillman is over 80 years young and is still giving back to the community. She is an unsung hero, who is quick to point out that she gets as much as she gives from tutoring. But, aren't do-gooders often humble like that? About a year ago, Maurine retired and was looking to stay active and found the opportunity to volunteer with the Center through an article in the Detroit Free Press about efforts to tackle adult literacy in Detroit.



Education has always been a part of Maurine's family culture, with her father, brother and son becoming doctors, her mother attending a teacher's school and Maurine herself obtaining a Doctorate in English from U of M. She has experienced the opportunities that learning and reading bring to people. She owned a bookstore for 15 years, because promoting reading has always been important to her.

Maurine says that tutoring adults in our GED program is fun, "Some of these students come to us so poorly educated, that if you can make a dent, it is so wonderful and gratifying." And she is even enjoying learning math along with them. She is always willing to do extra and help in any way that she can. This includes going up and down stairs repeatedly to make copies and adjusting her schedule to help students who need extra tutoring.

She makes an enormous impact with her wealth of knowledge and kindness. The students appreciate and respect her, because she demonstrates that she is there to help them. Maurine has been a true Hero to our students and to the Center and we celebrate her generosity of spirit and devotion! **Thanks for all that you have done and do Maurine!**

Thanks for having us!

SVSF Center was honored to participate in an U.S. Army TACOM panel discussion during Women's History month. It was an extraordinary day and a great privilege.

Thanks to –

Paul Lechner
Donna Edwards
Belinda Roland VanNoy
Maj. Gen. Clark LeMasters!



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.

AmazonSmile – Think of SVSF when you are shopping and Help Our Students! Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center whenever you shop on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com).

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

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.

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.

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!

St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center

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

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In the Community –

We are so grateful for the extraordinary volunteer assistance by the members of the Quicken Loans family of companies! More than 60 individual team members have volunteered so far this year and have made a tremendous difference for our kids! Their support and enthusiasm has been incredible and we are very thankful for their help!