

Your Inspiration Source – SVSF Center!

Dear Friends,

Happy Fall! First, let's acknowledge that there is a lot going on in the world now and every day seems to bring more drama. There are lots of inspirational messages floating around because it can be a challenge to stay positive. Our inspirational message to you is this... take a look at what St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher has been DOING!

Like everyone else, when COVID-19 first hit, the Center had to regroup and we determined that our services were needed now more than ever, due to the high unemployment and economic challenges. Fortunately, both our Children's and Adult programs had online components that had been implemented in the past year. So we were able to quickly adapt into a virtual format and continue to provide remote learning to those students that had online capabilities. For students that didn't have either the technology or internet access, both programs also immediately began to put together packets, materials and books. In this way, we were able to help ALL of our students remotely.

Next came our reopening strategy, which was based upon CDC guidelines. We deep-cleaned the Center and implemented safety protocols, including signage, mandatory masks, temperature checks, mandatory quarantines if staff are exposed/travel, etc. While the Center is still not open for regular classes, the staff has made a partial return in shifts throughout the work week, to guarantee appropriate social distancing while continuing to work from home the rest of the time. Further, measures were put into place to ensure that any visitors (such as vendors, donors, etc.) could safely enter the Center, as well. Currently, we are at the point where we can see students in person by appointment for testing only if they do not have the capabilities at home. Further opening for full classes will be predicated upon the course the virus takes, as well as developments, such as vaccines.

We've done a lot, right? But we were just getting started! Next, we opened enrollment on April 10 for both programs. While other educational facilities were shutting down, we were ramping up to help meet the need. In our adult program alone, we **increased the number of enrolled students by 76% and increased the number of online adults by more than 400%! How is this possible?** Two reasons: amazing volunteers (that you can read about further in this newsletter) and new grants.

Through two new grants, courtesy of **Detroit at Work and United Way of Southeastern Michigan**, we had two huge developments:

We expanded our adult services into **Pontiac** and have recently **added a NEW Adult Service** of Foundational Skills (for adults with reading levels below the 6th grade). This includes the addition of a new staff member, **Audrean Williams**, our new Manager of Adult Basic Education. We also hired a new Manager of Individual and Corporate Giving, **Kevin Lill**. Both Audrean and Kevin come to the Center with solid experience and passion for helping the low income community to make a better life for themselves and their families.



Done yet? Not even close! We had our first "Pandemic Graduate", **Robin Martin**, who had this to say: "I would like to tell you about SVSF Center. Initially, I had been seeking to obtain my GED, but my six children were my main motivators to accomplish that goal sooner. Then COVID-19 arrived, and with the 'Stay Home. Stay Safe' order, I was able to complete my GED (high school equivalency certificate) within 6 months! I can now continue my elevation properly equipped with the essentials I learned from SVSF Center's adult education free tutoring program. Thank you so very much, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center." We are happy and proud of Robin and will be here to continue to support her as she pursues her plans of becoming a healthy care business owner and pursues her passion in entertainment!



You want more? You got it! Many intern programs were cancelled due to COVID-19, but we are very excited to have worked with Wayne State University to establish a safe, but vital experience for two new interns: **Kristen Hanna** and **Brooke Keoshian**. We know that we will see great things from these two ladies!

I can honestly say that I have never been prouder of our team than I am by how they have risen to the challenge of a pandemic and kept the Center growing during these crazy times. You want an inspirational message? Look no further than SVSF Center!

Stay safe and well my friends!

Diane Renaud, Executive Director/CEO



2020 *Volunteer* of the **YEAR**

Norman C. Dewey

Due to COVID-19, we were unable to celebrate our 2020 Volunteer of the Year in person at our Celebrate the Center event. So, we would

like to celebrate the enormous contribution that **Norman Dewey** has made for the Center since 2014, when he began tutoring with the SVSF Adult Education program. Norm is a product of the Detroit Public school system. He graduated from Cass Technical High School in 1970, then he earned an engineering degree from Wayne State University in 1974. Norm's Masters in Business and Masters in Economics are both from University of Detroit.

Norm lives in Troy, Michigan with his wife, Debra Renée Mann-Dewey, whom he lovingly calls "Sarge". Norm and Deb have two sons, Dr. Dominic and Jeremy, who is an Editor for a European company. His sons have blessed him with three grandchildren, Julia, Jalie, and Micah. While employed as an Engineer in the automotive industry, Norm began his interest of tutoring math to middle school students. During this time,

he also participated in the Junior Achievement program in the Detroit Public High schools.

Norm has traveled many parts of the world on both business and pleasure. His travels have taken him to almost all 50 states, and abroad to Europe (France, Italy, England, Austria) and Africa (Ghana and Nigeria). His favorite hobby is reading, enjoying non-fiction with a focus on Black history and politics.

Upon retirement, Norm became involved with tutoring math at Focus: HOPE, where he helped to develop and teach the Earn-and-Learn work/study program, which is still in existence today. Then he joined the SVSF Adult Education Program at our Central Campus (located at Focus: HOPE), where he has been an extraordinary part of the team, helping the hundreds of students at the location each year. Norm's passion for education and compassion for others and his devotion to giving back are just a few of the reasons why we are so grateful to him and why we Celebrate Norman C. Dewey as our 2020 Volunteer of the Year!

Thanks for everything that you do Norm!!

Thanks for everything **Ms. Luella!**



It is with great sadness that we announce the retirement of one of our extraordinary volunteers: **Luella Jahsan**. Ms. Luella, as she is known and loved by students, other volunteers and staff alike, has been with the Center since 2009, and was celebrated as Volunteer of the Year in 2013.



Born and raised in Detroit, she hired into the Engineering Department at Michigan Bell at 18, married at 19 and then had 5 children in 6 years. Although a devoted wife and mother, Luella continued to strive for improving her mind as well, so she began taking classes at Oakland Community College, earning her Associate Degrees in Library Science, Spanish and Liberal Arts. She was then hired into Oak Park as a Library teacher. 10 years later it was time for more changes. Oak Park gave her a year's leave, where she completed her classroom teaching degree and then a Master's in Children's Reading. She then returned to the classroom for another 10 years. When her husband passed away, she decided to retire.

Luella said "Of course, my house was too quiet and I found SVSF as a place to continue to teach. Through it all, my 5 children and 6 grandchildren encouraged, and prodded me to keep going. Although I will miss the Center and its people greatly, it was time to pass the chalk to the next person in line. Thank you all for the memories!!"

In her 11 years with the Center, she devoted more than 22,000 hours in volunteer time, helping our students change their lives. Literally thousands of students have been impacted by Ms. Luella. She embodies all the characteristics of what is outstanding in a human being – integrity, kindness, generosity, dedication and commitment. She will be sorely missed and we are so thankful for all that she has done and all of the lives that she has impacted, including our team!

We wish you all the best in your retirement Ms. Luella!!



Save the Date!
April 10, 2021

2021

Celebrate the Center

Family Movie Day – Featuring

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

at the

Historic Redford Theatre

17360 Lahser Rd., Detroit, MI 48219



(Subject to COVID-19 Safety Guidelines)

GOLDEN TICKET

Amazing Volunteers!

For a lot of us, the pandemic has been scary and frustrating being home all the time, having our normal routines impacted. But there are a special group of people that have made the Center part of their “new normal” by volunteering. A lot of them are existing volunteers, but we have also welcomed a number of new volunteers who have used this special time to do the community work that they never had time for before.

They have worked remotely with both our children and adult students, pulled weeds, helped prepare packets for students that do not have internet access, and created special remote learning projects for the children. They have made masks, gathered and created special learning activity kits for the children that don't have internet and so many other tasks that made it possible for the Center staff to keep going. We are grateful beyond measure for their efforts and enthusiasm for continuing our important services for those in need during these strange times.

Jada Bates	Debra Betke	Andy Blank
David Collins	Clare-Therese Deguzman	Steve Dunbar
Patrick Endres	Eva Essex	Barb Evans
Lori Garon	Christina Giles	David Kassab
Toniya King	William Korte	Robert Kuhr
David Kuziemko	Emily Li	Vince Licari
Allison Mack	Jack Mills	Preston Moore
Emily Morford	Fay Najor	Michael Nelson
Ian Nichols	Rosemary O'Malley	Scott Paik
George Perdue	Christina Pratnicki	Dharam Ramachandra
Robert Rodibaugh	Jenette Shepard	Maurine Sillman
Julia Sturtz	Mark Suzsan	Lahari Vavilala
Sarvani Yellayi	Maureen Zack	

Thanks to the SVSF Board of Trustees!

Throughout this difficult time, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center has been able to continue to operate without laying off staff. But it has also been able to expand services to meet more needs of the many families impacted by the economic conditions of the pandemic. None of this would have been possible without the foresight and commitment of the SVSF Board of Trustees and its Finance Committee. When the pandemic first appeared, they ensured that the Center was in a good cash position to continue operations, without sacrificing sound investments. Their dedication to ensuring the Center could continue operations unabated has helped us to secure new funding to expand our reach. The SVSF Team is grateful for their vision and perseverance!

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 Kevin Lill at (313) 535-9200, extension 3109.

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.org.**

