



St. Louis Center serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an intentional, faith-based community.

WINTER | 2024

## YOUR GENEROSITY KEEPS THE FUN ROLLING!

### ***You met the Match!***

Your generosity has a direct impact on the lives of St. Louis Center residents. One of the programs funded by the match is activities.

One evening, several residents were waiting happily for Laura Rayer, St. Louis Center Evening Activities Coordinator, to arrive with her beloved crafts and games, putting everyone in the mood to ring in the New Year with a big smile.

Laura's first stop is in her office, which is jam-packed with a diverse collection of craft-able supplies. There are the usual crayons and colored paper, along with games, puzzles, balls, and yarn, with plenty of whimsy, all overseen by the giraffe on the back wall. She fills her wagon with activities that inspire imagination, carefully selecting items



**Alex** enjoys **Laura's** visits especially when it involves bowling.

she knows will be a hit with the residents.

Once her baskets are full, Laura heads off to the different buildings on campus, tailoring her activities specifically to the residents who live in each of the homes. They await her arrival with pleasure, wanting to know what she has in mind for them.

Some pepper her with questions and others help empty the sacs to set up the activities. The Direct Care Workers enjoy her visits too, wondering what she has come up with to fit the mood and the season.

Center residents welcome Laura three evenings each week. They have come to expect indoor bowling and bingo on Tuesdays, crafts, baking, and active games in the gym on Wednesdays, and house visits on Fridays, fun projects incorporating motion and music into many of the activities.

"Recreational and leisure activities really do make a difference in the busy lives of our active SLC residents. I'm so thankful to be working here. Thank you to everyone for your gracious support!" Laura said.



## CLAY ARTISTS EMERGE

For the past four months, Eli Zemper of Curiouser Clay has been teaching the residents how to work with clay according to their abilities. Eli says, "This is the highlight of my week. They are all such a joy to work with."

Their first projects were ornaments. Some were even displayed in Eli's gallery during the holidays.

Eli is now conducting interviews with the clay artists and teaching them to make windchimes. She partnered with Chelsea District Library to display the artwork throughout May. Watch for details about the artist reception on May 5th and an opportunity to make your own windchimes at St. Louis Center.



**Tiffany** watches as **Eli** (right) helps **Jacqui** and **David** create ornaments.

## CHANGING OF THE GUARDS



**Fr. Satheesh** looks forward to impacting the future of the Center.

Fr. Satheesh Alphonse, SdC, assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer, succeeding Fr. Enzo Addari, SdC, on December 1, 2023. Fr. Satheesh brings his own unique energy and charisma to the role. Originally from India, he is known for his joyful spirit and commitment to spreading the Gospel. He began his journey at St. Louis Center in 2006, later serving at the Pious Union in Grass Lake, and since 2018 as pastor of Our Lady of Fatima in Michigan Center. Fr. Satheesh's new role as

CEO reflects his extensive service and community involvement. His leadership is warmly embraced by both the residents and staff of St. Louis Center, who are excited to welcome a familiar and respected figure into this pivotal role. Fr. Satheesh is well positioned to lead the Center into the future, further enriching its legacy of compassionate care with innovation.

## FROM FR. SATHEESH



The Seasons of Advent and Christmas have come and gone and against the background of the cold, snow, and ice - the specialty of Michigan and its changing weather – yet one thing remains constant: St. Louis Center remains a place where God's Providence can be seen tangibly. The love and care of God's special children continues because of the prayers

and support from each and every one of our supporters and well-wishers. You are the ones who keep St. Louis Center thriving in service to our residents.

As I begin my tenure as the CEO of the Center, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Fr. Enzo Addari, who has been part of St. Louis Center for the past 40 plus years; he has guided the growth of St. Louis Center through many difficult situations over the past 15 years as CEO. It remains a vibrant place of hope and love for those with special disabilities of all ages and walks of life due to his efforts.

We remain steadfast in the pursuit of a Guanellan standard: With Faith, Love, and Competence, we steadfastly pursue greater cooperation among the many educators with different roles and responsibilities in the Center for the good of those we serve. In all the meetings and efforts to change and improve services, we focus on this special element; we are all here for the same purpose – to serve our brothers and sisters with intellectual and developmental disabilities so that they may achieve their full potential.

Our success continues to rely on not only the efforts of our staff, but upon the success of our many fundraisers that you, our charitable supporters, have made possible. We have had two matching fund efforts and, in both cases have exceeded our goals. Many thanks to all those who have made these events a success and to all those who are beginning efforts for this New Year.

We will continue to strengthen and support our staff's efforts to maintain the highest quality of care and support for those we serve. Our immediate future efforts are focused on strengthening our Day-Program here at St. Louis Center; changing conditions have resulted in more and more of our residents remaining on campus. The growth, dignity and safety of each individual in our care, encompassed by a compassionate and loving environment, remains our central goal. These efforts, guided by the principle of the founder of The Servants of Charity, Fr. Guanella, can remain viable through the prayers and sacrifices of so many of you. May God bless you all throughout this New Year 2024.

*Fr. Satheesh*



## LUNCH WITH LEGISLATORS



On December 20th, **Glenn Johnson**, SLC Community Advisory Council member; **Rep. Kathy Schmaltz**, District 46; **James Johnson**, staffer; and **Wendy Zielen**, SLC Development Director; joined the priests, residents' family members, benefactors and **Zach Hayward**, staff member of **Rep. Debbie Dingell**, for a discussion about legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

## LAUGH YOUR SOCKS OFF

John Heffron hosted a comedy show in downtown Chelsea December 1st. Nearly 300 people gathered at Collins at the Clock Tower bringing gifts of socks and craft items for St. Louis Center residents. John



**Jacqui, John Heffron, and Kyle** together after the show.

did an hour-long stand-up act that kept the crowd in stitches. Two residents and three Center staff members were on hand to receive the gifts.

## SLC COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Joseph Munie, Chair**  
**Donna Hrozencik, MD, Secretary**  
**Glenn Johnson, Treasurer**

Nancy Graebner  
William Lamb, JD  
George Mallison  
Kathi Neuman  
Norm Neuman  
Juanita Pampuch  
Jerry Ruggirello

Andrew A. Shmina  
Rosalie Tocco-Bradley  
Don Walker  
George Walrath  
Vickie Walrath  
Christopher Kolomjec,  
(MI State Deputy, KofC)



## CENTER STAFF LIVE THEIR ROLE AND CARRY OUT THEIR TASKS IN AN ATTITUDE OF CONFIDENCE AND OPTIMISM.

- WITH FAITH, LOVE, AND CONFIDENCE 54



### Family | Community

St. Louis Center staff call into play their best resources, beginning with creativity... Being creative doesn't mean devising solutions that are practically impossible, but being inventive, finding answers by bringing them up from the wealth of their experience and appealing to their creativity.

Visit the website to view current staff openings.

### Volunteers are Family too

Volunteers play an integral role in the life of the Center. Explore the opportunities at: [stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/volunteer/](http://stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/volunteer/) or scan the code with the camera app on your smartphone or tablet.



### Volunteer Spotlight



Lake Trust Credit Union employees 'Powered by Good,' volunteered at the Center October 9th. One team helped with outdoor fall clean up while a team indoors helped make decorations for the haunted house.

## PROFILES OF GUANELLIAN STAFF

### Kaitlyn LaRocque

Kaitlyn's life journey is with a strong commitment to working with people of all ages and abilities. This led her to join the kitchen staff at St. Louis Center a little over two years ago, where her passion for people and her love for cooking found a perfect match.

Kaitlyn has displayed her skills and talents by fearlessly confronting every challenge that crossed her path. One of these challenges involves mastering the art of modified diets, making sure each person receives the specific nutrition they need.

87% of the residents receive food tailored to their unique differences. Each meal is planned far in advance to help accommodate each person's needs. Precise in her work, Kaitlyn consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that the residents are not just well-fed but also safe, content, and satisfied. Her journey at the Center has become a testament to the remarkable impact that one person's dedication can have on the lives of those she serves.



**Kaitlyn** said, "It has taken time, but I have learned every resident's restrictions, preferences, and eating habits. This helps them live happy and healthy lives."

## FALL AUCTION SHINES

Saturday, October 28th was the 36th Annual Fall Dinner Auction to benefit the residents of St. Louis Center.

Kathi Neuman may have handed the reins to Eileen Augustine and Barb Lewis, but she continues to support the event and cheer on her successors.

This year's event was held at St. Mary Church with about 180 people in attendance. They had the opportunity to bid on many beautiful items that were donated by area businesses and St. Louis Center supporters.

Several trips and home rental opportunities were some of the items for auction-goers to take advantage of. University of Michigan Head Football Coach Jim Harbaugh donated two pairs of 50-yard line tickets, an autographed helmet, and football. A gorgeous necklace and earrings set was a popular item from LaJolla Fine Jewelry.



**Kathi Neuman and Barb Lewis** were thrilled with the success of this year's auction.

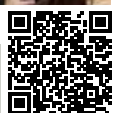
After the silent auctions closed, dinner was served and the live program began. Pat and Al Zangara were recognized for the 40 years they have supported the Center. Gloria Miller was given an award for her role in the Center's history. The highlight of the

evening was the live auction.

Many new faces were visible in the crowd, which means that the Center has some new friends to help spread the word about our mission. As a result of the hard work of the committee, the event brought in over \$90k for the Center.



**Joey**, a St. Louis Center resident, enjoyed assisting during the live auction.



## DECEMBER TO REMEMBER

### CHELSEA CARES

For the past four years, Ugly Dog Distillery, a local small business, has been the driving force behind a heartfelt initiative—an annual donation drive for Christmas presents for the residents of the St. Louis Center. Patrons of Ugly Dog were asked to bring in toys and craft kits that were later delivered to the Center for distribution on Christmas morning. Once again, the Chelsea community delivered.



← **Rob Mida and Bailey** his dog greeted patrons as they brought in their gifts.

attempted to “Melt the Snowman.” The show ended with the ladies reciting “The Reason for Christmas,” and a short chorus of “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” The gym was filled with many family members, friends and benefactors. The Knights of Columbus presented a new sweatshirt to each resident and the Parents’ Association distributed gifts to all staff members. After the

presentations, there was refreshments for everyone to enjoy.



↑ **Megan** and the men of St. Joe Hall were ‘Melting the Snowman.’

### A VISIT FROM SANTA

Alfonso Chirco of the Federazione Abruzzese del Michigan joined forces with a group of friends to kick-off the Christmas season at St. Louis Center **December 2nd**. The Christmas party began with Mass in the Center’s chapel. The visitors prepared and served an amazing lunch. But the moment each resident was waiting for was when Santa arrived in the gym to distribute each resident a gift. The residents may have received the gifts, but the Italian visitors were blessed to be able to give from their time and treasure.



← **Jerome, Jackie, and Al Chirco** enjoyed singing Christmas Carols together.

### SANTA DELIVERS

On Christmas Day, Santa Claus arrived with two elves to distribute Christmas gifts to each of the St. Louis Center residents. Former CAC member Dan Burch was Santa. He enlisted his son Matthew and son-in-law Brendan Hagan to assist. The residents are used to



↑ **Matthew, Dan, and Brendan** (standing) visited with Daniel while delivering gifts.

### CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Every year the direct care staff at St. Louis Center, help residents under their care prepare a skit, song, or other performance to be presented at the annual Christmas Program. The gym was transformed into a blend of a Nativity scene and the North Pole **December 10th**. Some of the residents danced and sang their favorite Christmas song. One group performed “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” another performed “We are Santa’s Elves.” Some became dancing Frostys, while another group

finding their presents under the tree in their homes. But this year they were so surprised when Santa himself brought their gifts to them.

## A SPOOKY SUCCESS



**T-Mobile** distributed treat buckets to 300 people.

*The residents of St. Louis Center look forward to a spooky night every October.*

For weeks, the staff and volunteers put their heads together to create something awesome: a Trunk or Treat event right on the Center’s campus.

More than 25 vehicles lined up in the parking lot, ready for the Trunk or Treat action on **October 26th**.

There was even more spooky excitement inside the Center. Visitors got the chance to embark on a chilling tour through the Haunted House. Employees and family members teamed up, volunteering their time and talent to bring this eerie adventure to life.

The kitchen crew at the Center didn’t just stop at spooky fun—they also whipped up a fantastic community dinner. Hundreds of baked potatoes and gallons of delicious chili were devoured by more than 350 visitors.

The premiere sponsor of the event was **T-Mobile**.



**Stanley** (right) enjoyed the fun with his friends from the greater Chelsea community.



# SET YOUR SIGHTS ON SPRING

## GET YOUR ST. LOUIS CENTER MERCH

St. Louis Center shirts were a big hit, therefore we have decided to offer a spring selection of items. T-shirts and hoodies are available in either white or yellow with a navy blue logo. Polo shirts and half-zip jackets are still available in navy blue with an embroidered logo. Place your orders by March 1st and we will once again offer pick-up at the Center.

Adult T-shirt S-XL/2-3XL

Hoodie

To see the full catalog scan this code or

visit:

[stlouiscenter.org/merch/](http://stlouiscenter.org/merch/)



**Aubree's**  
PIZZERIA & GRILL

**DINE TO DONATE**  
**AT AUBREE'S**

**20%** OF YOUR BILL WILL  
BE DONATED TO:

**SAINT LOUIS CENTER**

**PRESENT THIS FLYER**  
**TO YOUR SERVER ON:**

**March 7, 2024**  
**11:00am-10:00pm**  
VALID ON DINE-IN, DELIVERY & CARRYOUT

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SUITE 101

### DISCLAIMER:

Donation percentage excludes tax, tip, and alcohol sales. Valid at participating restaurants during specific listed hours. Must present flyer for organization to receive credit for purchase. Flyers are not to be distributed in the restaurant or within the perimeter of the restaurant parking lot — doing so may forfeit donations. Thank you!

## WIN AN ALASKAN CRUISE & LAND TOUR

*7-Day Inside Passage Cruise Plus 3-Day Land Tour for 2 People\**



**TICKETS**  
**\$25**  
OR 5 FOR \$100



Drawing to be held on

**JUNE 24, 2024**

at the

**GOLF & GLORY OUTING**

(need not be present to win)



**stlouiscenter.org**

*cruise over to the website for more details*

How to get your tickets:

- Stop by St. Louis Center
- Watch Parish bulletins for upcoming sale dates in May and June
- During St. Louis Center events

*\*Winner can take a cash option.*

**TICKETS**  
**ON SALE**  
**NOW!**



## BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

St. Louis Center residents joined around 50 community members for a magical pancake breakfast and a special visit with Santa right at the Center on Saturday, December 16th.

After everyone enjoyed a delicious breakfast, people could create their very own Christmas bookmarks and ornaments. To add to the magic, the classic tale of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" was read aloud, creating the perfect atmosphere.

Santa made a grand entrance, creating a buzz of excitement. The



Community members had the opportunity to visit with Santa and spend time with the residents.

jolly man himself took his time greeting people, and making sure he knew exactly what everyone wanted.

After visiting Santa, each guest got to choose a present from under the beautifully adorned Christmas tree.

Parents and kids alike had a blast mingling with the residents, creating memories that will last a lifetime. This event was a big hit, spreading joy and warmth throughout the community.



## ROLLOVER, IRA!

A Tax-Saving Way to Help St. Louis Center

If you are 70½ years old or older, you can take advantage of a simple way to benefit St. Louis Center and receive tax benefits in return. You can give any amount up to \$100,000 per year from your IRA directly to a qualified charity such as ours without having to pay income taxes on the money. This popular gift option is commonly called the IRA charitable rollover, but you may also see it referred to as a qualified charitable distribution, or QCD for short.

Why Consider This Gift?

- Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making.
- The rollover generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.
- Beginning in the year you turn 73, you can use your gift to satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution.
- Since the gift doesn't count as income, it can reduce your annual income level. This may help lower your Medicare premiums and decrease the amount of Social Security that is subject to tax.



Contact us to see how a rollover could benefit you.



## YOU CAN BUILD A LIGHTHOUSE OF HOPE

St. Louis Center continues to face many unanticipated costs after the pandemic, including a big increase in staffing cost –not to mention ongoing maintenance and structural needs—all leading to an ongoing shortfall.

### BECOME A MONTHLY SUSTAINER

The Center's mission is to make sure that residents are always provided with a secure and loving home, and your help can take this mission even further. Our monthly sustainer program is your opportunity to extend the impact of your gift to be felt for years to come.

You can support St. Louis Center with a recurring gift of any amount. Spread out your giving into monthly payments and ensure that the residents at the Center have the continued support and care they need each day!

In gratitude for your efforts in building a LIGHTHOUSE OF HOPE please accept one of these gifts when you become a monthly sustainer.

To give or see more options, visit: [stlouiscenter.org/give-here/sustainers/](http://stlouiscenter.org/give-here/sustainers/)



### YOUR IMPACT OUR APPRECIATION



### Make a Gift Today

☐ **One-Time Gift:** ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ **\$304** - Help cover #benevolentcare costs for one day for a resident.

☐ **Recurring Donation** Make a monthly gift and automatically become a **SUSTAINER!**

**Monthly Gift:** ☐ \$5 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment Information

Payment Type: Credit Card Cash Check

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number : \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ 3-Digit Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail** this form to: Development Dept., St. Louis Center, 16195 W. Old U.S. Hwy 12, Chelsea, MI 48118 or

**Donate Online** by scanning the code below or at: [stlouiscenter.org/about/news/newsletter/st-louis-spirit/#donate](http://stlouiscenter.org/about/news/newsletter/st-louis-spirit/#donate)

**Note:** We value your privacy as much as you do. We will never share your information with any third party.



# CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## DEDICATION AND JOY IN SERVING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

**Fr. Amal was awarded his PhD and is now Reverend Doctor Amal. On Wednesday, November 8th, Fr. Amalorpavalanathan, SdC, presented his dissertation to the faculty panel for approval of his doctoral degree from Madonna University in Livonia.**

***This is an excerpt from his dissertation.***

The service of direct care workers (DCWs) plays a vital role in the continuum of care for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). While the work is emotionally exhausting, this study examines the spirituality and commitment of DCWs and how their work rewards them intrinsically. To provide quality services for individuals with IDD that respect their dignity, individuality, and ability requires well-trained, compassionate, committed individuals eager to offer quality care.

The services that DCWs provide are complex but also rewarding. Research by the Catholic Health Association of the United States emphasized,

**“Often those who choose this work feel a special ‘calling,’ their commitment to caring for others come from deeply held values.”**

One of the most significant challenges the field of human services faces is finding and keeping DCWs. Several studies identified high staff turnover, which inevitably and negatively affects the quality of care provided.

Research was conducted in 2023 to illuminate and examine the lived experience of DCWs working with individuals with IDD in order to understand and support their commitment, which would improve the retention and better quality of care for the clients with IDD. Twenty participants involved in the study were employed within various private and public agencies providing services to individuals with IDD. They include private residential and group homes, detention centers, special education programs, and Community Mental Health programs (CMH). Among the 20 participants in the study were twelve females and eight males. To help the participants recall and respond to the interview, they were interviewed with ten questions regarding work-life experience.

### In Conclusion ...

DCWs find their job meaningful when they are making a difference in the lives of others, advocating for vulnerable individuals, building meaningful relationships with clients, using their spiritual values to impact their personal-life, family-life, and work-life positively, and affecting a better perspective of life. DCWs quoted The Golden Rule: “Treat others as you wish to be treated.” This was the fundamental spiritual insight that motivated them in dedication and spirituality. DCWs must demonstrate the qualities of altruism and friendliness that come from embracing their work as more than just a job. Many see their work as “a calling” or “a mission.”



Dr. Karen Obsniuk, Dr. Stewart Wood, Rev. Dr. Amal, and Dr. Michele Harmala.

### Main Themes Defining Direct Care Workers

*The findings from the interviews were categorized into overarching themes*

**The following 12 prominent themes were identified in this study:**

- 1. Direct Care Workers stated that their job requires love and dedication**
- 2. Fulfilling clients' needs defines success in their work**
- 3. Direct Care Workers attribute their success to meaningful relationships with their clients**
- 4. Seeing the clients grow motivates DCWs positively**
- 5. DCWs recognize the virtue of love, patience, and dedication in their service**
- 6. DCWs take pride in their job**
- 7. DCWs feel a sense of accomplishment**
- 8. DCWs express a sense of purpose and willingness to continue**
- 9. DCWs acknowledge the positive impact of their job on their own personal life**
- 10. DCWs express the need for fair compensation**
- 11. DCWs insist on direct involvement of the management in direct care**
- 12. DCWs seek to foster communication and recognition.**

*Rev. Dr. Amal's dissertation in its entirety will be published soon. Check the website for updates.*



### SHARE YOUR STORY

St. Louis Center has a long history with many friends. If you have a story that you would like to share for the archives of the Center, use this link to submit your story and photos:  
[stlouiscenr.org/history/](https://stlouiscenr.org/history/)



### **Pasta and the Priests**

February 8, 2024  
St. Louis Center - Chelsea

### **Dine to Donate**

March 7, 2024  
Aubree's Pizza - Dexter

### **Paesano Dinner**

TBA

### **Golf and Glory Outing**

June 24, 2024  
University of Michigan Golf Course -  
Ann Arbor

### **Sean Brian Ashline Memorial Outing**

July 29, 2024  
Chemung Hills- Howell

### **Dad and Lad Outing**

August 7, 2024  
Twin Lakes Golf & Swim Club -  
Oakland

### **Memorial Golf Outing**

August 17, 2024  
Pierce Lake Golf Course - Chelsea

### **Kevin George Memorial Outing**

September 8, 2024  
Lakeland Hills Golf Course - Jackson

### **Fall Dinner Auction**

November 9, 2024  
St. Mary - Chelsea

Learn more on our website:

[stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/events/](https://stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/events/)

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## REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS

**Frank Pignanelli** passed on to his eternal home on Wednesday, December 20, 2023, at Chelsea Hospital with family members by his side. He was born on May 10, 1937, in Dearborn, Michigan to immigrant parents.

He graduated from Fordson High School in 1955. His parents, Battista and Rose (laquinta) Pignanelli were thrilled when their only son was accepted at the University of Michigan College of Pharmacy.

It was at UofM that he met his future wife and fellow student, Sharon Lee McKay. Upon her graduation in 1961, they were married at St. Clement Church in Dearborn. They had two children, Lisa Marie

Pignanelli (Ivey), born at Ireland Army Hospital in Fort Knox, Kentucky in 1963, near the end of his

military service, and John Christopher, born in Ann Arbor. Lisa and Clark Ivey in turn gifted him with three beloved grandchildren, Brett, Megan, and Trent. He returned to civilian life in 1964 and worked at Cunningham Drugs. His long career in retail pharmacy concluded with his retirement from Rite Aid in 2000.

His pharmacy career left little time for volunteer activities, so once retired,



Frank began making up for lost time. For a number of years, he was in charge of many projects for the Knights of Columbus Council #3092. The St. Louis Center Golf Outing also enjoyed his volunteer organizing efforts.

**Floyd Campbell**  
**Christine Cox**  
**Carl Lesser**  
**Anne Lucido**  
**Anne Murphy**  
**Frank Pignanelli**  
**Doris Pratt**  
**Katherine Quinn**  
**Raymond Slomiany**  
**Norma Smith**

**Dale Wallace**  
**Carol Zago**

