



WINTER
2026



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

LEGACY OF THE MISSION



Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo passed away December 16, 2025 at the age of 85. Fr. Joe's dedication to serving those in need and his commitment to building communities of care demonstrated the profound impact one individual could make on the world. His life's journey stood as a testament to the power of compassion, perseverance, and faith in creating lasting positive change. Fr. Joseph's kindness and thoughtfulness,

as remembered by the staff of St. Louis Center, revealed that he was not only a religious leader, but also a living example of compassion and care. His death marked a profound loss for the residents, staff, and supporters of the Center. His life of service remains a powerful reminder of how one individual can positively change the world, and his legacy continues to inspire others to follow in his footsteps.

THE HEART OF THE SEASON

The highlight of the Christmas season at St. Louis Center is always the annual Christmas program presented by the residents, held last year on December 14. This cherished tradition reflects what makes St. Louis Center special: a community where individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are supported, encouraged, and celebrated..

Assistant Program Director Carlie Hartwick and the direct care staff produced the program. In the weeks leading up to the performance, staff spent countless hours rehearsing with residents, building confidence, and ensuring each person felt prepared and proud. Their dedication—and the resources that make this level of care possible—resulted in one of the strongest performances in recent memory.

The St. Louis Center gym filled to capacity as families, friends, and community members gathered in support. Fr. Satheesh welcomed guests, Fr. Franklin opened the event with prayer, and Carlie introduced the program's new theme—a Jeopardy-style game show that brought energy and connection to the room.

Through traditional Christmas songs, poetry, and



Cathy, Janet Best, Direct Care Worker, and Jacqui, exit the stage after their sign language performance of "Tell the World of His Love."

presentations focused on the first Christmas and the true meaning of the season, residents confidently shared their talents and voices. It was a joyful journey of music, movement, and storytelling.

Afterward, the St. Louis Center Family Association presented gifts to staff in appreciation of their dedication. Residents and guests then gathered in the lobby for food, fellowship, and celebration.



Pasta Dinner
with the Priests
March 5, 2026

Get tickets now!



FROM FR. SATHEESH

Dear Friends of St. Louis Center,



We are running into a new year! As we do, I must look back on the amazing 2025 we had at the Center. With so many engaged and generous donors, we were once again able to provide quality, life-enhancing care to all of our residents. I truly cannot thank you enough.

Over the holidays, I had the beautiful opportunity to visit family and friends in India. As I traveled, I felt the interconnectedness of us all. While there are many differences between the cultures of India and America, there are also many similarities. We are all Children of God searching for connection and fullness of life. Many ministries run by the Servants of Charity and others in India serve people in need. It is a blessing to see so many committed people around the world uplifting the lives of the needy. Humanity is the same everywhere, constantly revealing God's love to those in need. Thanks be to God.

As I look forward to 2026, I am reminded of the resilience Christ has imbued in us as humans. Together, when we care for our neighbors, the vulnerable, and even those we disagree with, we can overcome any hardship. I think especially of those who donated in so many ways. I am personally indebted to the Community Advisory Committee members who have embraced our mission as their own, as well as all involved in fundraising efforts. What a gift! Everyone, with unique abilities, commits to providing the best life for our residents. I am deeply grateful for the hardworking staff of St. Louis Center. May the Good Lord bless all who enhance the lives of our residents.

This year, I extend an invitation to all supporters and friends to get to know our residents and staff. Come share a meal with our residents. Come work alongside our staff. Come engage with the meaningful work we are doing in any way you can. On behalf of all the residents of St. Louis Center, I profusely thank you for your generous support. God bless you.

Fr. Satheesh

RAISING FUNDS AND SPIRITS



Clark and Lisa Ivey, were proud to support her mother, Sharon Pignanelli (right) as she and her late husband Frank were honored for their longtime support of the Center.

More than 200 people attended St. Louis Center's Fall Dinner Auction on **Saturday, November 8th**, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Chelsea. The evening of fellowship and philanthropy was a highlight of the Center's annual fundraising events. Auctioneer David Helmer engaged guests in a vibrant live auction filled with laughter and enthusiastic bidding. As emcee, Peg Bravo guided the evening's program.

Fr. Satheesh received generous gifts on behalf of St. Louis Center, including a \$25,000 check from Fred Ashline of the **Sean Brian Ashline Foundation**. The **Knights of Columbus State Council** awarded a \$25,000 grant, which supplemented the continued support of local councils provided through their annual Tootsie Roll drives. Beth Chamberlain and Patsy Brundage of the **Dexter Columbus Ladies Auxiliary** presented \$5,000 from their ongoing fundraising efforts.

A special moment of the evening came when Sharon Pignanelli received the St. Louis Guanella Founder's Award in honor of many years of devoted service by Sharon and her late husband, Frank. In a remarkable act of generosity, Norm and Kathi Neuman pledged to ensure all fund-a-need items reached their fundraising goals.

Our heartfelt thanks go to event chair Eileen Augustine, the auction committee, our sponsors, donors, and volunteers. Especially, this year's Platinum Sponsors: **Roberts Paint & Body** and **Stellantis FCA Foundation**; and Gold Sponsor **Lothamer Tax Resolution**. Use the QR code below to see all sponsors.

Your support ensures exceptional care for St. Louis Center residents. Thank you!

Use the camera app on your mobile device to scan QR codes throughout the newsletter to read more about the Center.



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PROFILES OF GUANELLIAN STAFF

EMBARKING ON THE MISSION

**“GUANELLIAN PRINCIPLES
PLACE WORKERS ON A
JOURNEY TO ACHIEVE
BETTER HUMAN AND
PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE.”**

- WITH FAITH, LOVE, AND COMPETENCE 175



Family | Community

“If a worker embraces Guanellian ethics, he will be in a state of ‘permanent education,’ and will make himself available to all initiatives aimed at refining his human gifts and technical skills.” (*With Faith, Love, and Competence: Profile of the Guanellian Staff, 175*; a book inspired by the writings of St. Louis Guanella).

Please visit the website to view current staff openings.

Volunteers are Family

Committed volunteers help provide “Fullness of Life” for the residents. Explore volunteer opportunities at: stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/volunteer/

Volunteer Spotlight

Alan and Eileen Augustine are the chairpersons for two of our most prominent events. Alan leads the committee that plans the Golf & Glory Outing, and Eileen is the chairperson for the Fall Dinner Auction. Supporting each other, this dynamic couple ensures the success of these beloved events.



Welcome to our new Development Director, **Jackie Gordon**. Jackie brings a seasoned background in relationship building, donor engagement, and mission-centered fundraising. With experience spanning marketing, sales, nonprofit foundation work, and social services, she is passionate about connecting people with purpose and creating meaningful opportunities for generosity.

In her role at St. Louis Center, Jackie leads development strategy, major gift cultivation, and donor stewardship initiatives that strengthen and expand the Center’s impact. She is dedicated to building trust, fostering lasting partnerships, and ensuring that every act of generosity makes a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

For Jackie, this mission is deeply personal. She and her husband of 29 years have four children, and her youngest daughter has Down syndrome. Her family’s journey has shaped her belief in inclusion, compassionate care, and community - values that align closely with the heart of St. Louis Center.

We are delighted to welcome her to the team and look forward to the meaningful contributions she will bring while embracing and championing our mission.

Julia Zaher is the new Public Relations and Marketing Manager. She comes with a background in radio, television, and print journalism, having worked as a TV reporter on Capitol Hill, radio and podcast reporter, and radio host. Julia has extensive experience in fundraising events and communication, nonprofit management, and volunteer programs. She has enjoyed interacting with St. Louis Center residents when they visit her home parish, St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church in Saline.



Tracy Peters became the St. Louis Center Food Services Manager after years working in fast-paced restaurant kitchens and healthcare food service, seeking work that felt meaningful and less stressful.

Having previously worked in a group home for adults with developmental disabilities, she knew how fulfilling that environment could be. When the position opened at the Center, she applied and was thrilled when she was hired, immediately feeling comfortable and at home despite the longer commute.



Tracy loves cooking, which she calls her “love language,” and finds deep joy in preparing meals for the residents. Raised Catholic, she has also experienced a renewed sense of faith through her work, describing St. Louis Center as a place of genuine community, care, and belonging that she looks forward to each day.



A SEASON OF JOY AT ST. LOUIS CENTER

At St. Louis Center, Christmas is more than a date on the calendar—it is a season filled with anticipation, creativity, and connection.

Our residents look forward to this time of year with joyful expectation, embracing opportunities to celebrate with one another and with the wider community. Each moment reflects our mission: to walk alongside people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, nurturing their gifts, dignity, and joy.

This spirit was on full display through a beloved tradition in Adrian, where participants in our Skill-Building

Program once again took part in the **Comstock Christmas Riverwalk** tree lighting celebration. Inspired by a cheerful Candyland theme, residents handcrafted colorful candy decorations and playful game pieces, using skills developed in their daily programming. Their pride was evident as they traveled to Adrian to decorate the tree, topped with a whimsical creation designed last year by our Human Resources Director.

On **December 5th**, residents returned for the official Riverwalk opening. The evening began with a relaxed dinner at Culver's, followed by a festive downtown light parade.



Kristin, Melissa Roberts, Skill-Building Program Intern, and **Brian**, attended the lighting of the Comstock Christmas Riverwalk tree.

Though the winter air was crisp, the atmosphere was warm as the trees were illuminated for the season. The night ended with hot cocoa at a local café, where residents shared their Christmas hopes and dreams—simple, sincere conversations that captured the heart of the season.

Closer to home, St. Louis Center joined the **Chelsea Chamber's Hometown Holidays Light Pole Decorating Contest**. Continuing the Candyland theme, our Development Office transformed a light pole into a bright display of wrapped candies, candy canes, gumdrops, peppermints, and twinkling lights. This joyful contribution is a small but meaningful way we celebrate creativity, inclusion, and community spirit throughout the holidays.

Music also played a special role in this season of celebration. On **December 10th**, **Good News A Cappella**, a Christian a cappella group from the University of Michigan, visited the Center to share the joy of Christmas through song. Performing traditional carols and inviting residents to sing along, the group created a shared experience filled with laughter and warmth.



Good News A Cappella on the St. Louis Center stage.

The evening concluded with cookies, cocoa, and promises to gather again—an uplifting reminder that when voices are raised together, community is strengthened and joy is multiplied.



SCORING BIG WITH LOCAL YOUTH



Basketball is a favorite activity for many St. Louis Center residents, some who have played on Special Olympics teams for years.

To share the mission of St. Louis Center with young people in the community, Fitness Specialist Caitlin Blomquist invited the **Chelsea High School** boys and girls basketball teams to visit the Center on **December 15th**. Residents who were able participated in warm-up drills and a friendly game with the students in the gym.

Team members also spent time with residents who did not take part in the game, making Christmas decorations and coloring together. These shared moments reflected the heart of our mission—recognizing individual abilities, fostering inclusion, and building meaningful connections. Everyone had a great time!

UPCOMING EVENTS

AT THE CENTER

Fridays - 4:30pm
ROSARY WITH THE
RESIDENTS



March 5th - 6:00pm
PASTA DINNER WITH
THE PRIESTS

Don't miss this time honored tradition. Get tickets today.



ON THE HORIZON

June 22nd
GOLF & GLORY OUTING



Have you always wanted to play a round at the U-M Blue Course? Here is your chance.



August 15th
MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING



Help us to honor the memory of some of our greatest supporters. Pierce Lake Golf Course offers an amazing backdrop for a round with friends.



TRAVEL WITH US

JOURNEY TOGETHER. SUPPORT DREAMS.

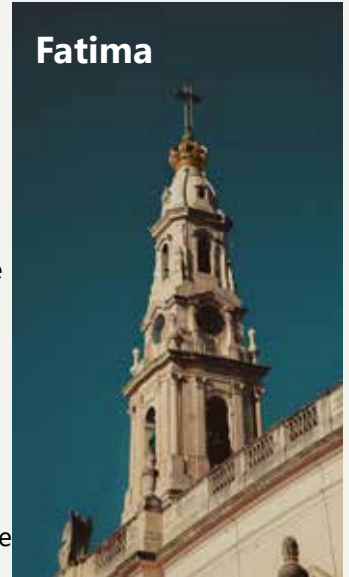
You are invited to experience extraordinary destinations while supporting the life-changing mission of St. Louis Center on Dream Tour IV. Now in its fourth journey, the Dream Tour lives up to its name, offering an inspiring experience, while a portion of the proceeds helps fulfill the dreams of the residents who call St. Louis Center home.

Along the way, travelers often discover that the friendships formed on this journey become just as meaningful—many returning home feeling part of the extended St. Louis Center family.

From **April 7–23, 2027**, guests are invited to join a 12- or 17-day journey through Portugal, Spain, Morocco, and France that blends faith, culture, and connection. The experience



Fatima



includes time at two cherished pilgrimage sites—Fatima, Portugal, and Lourdes, France. Highlights also include the historic Alcázar of Seville, the beauty of Plaza de España, and the

vibrant markets of Tangier, Morocco.

Travel unfolds at an unhurried pace aboard Azamara, a small luxury cruise line known for longer stays in port, including three nights in Seville, allowing time to truly experience each destination and one another.

Dream Tour IV is also a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and family who love to travel and whom you'd like to introduce to St. Louis Center and its mission.

If you're unable to join the journey, you can still be part of its impact by helping cover the cost of Fr. Satheesh with a donation marked "DTIV Satheesh."

Dream Tour IV is travel with heart—bringing people together in faith, friendship, and support of St. Louis Center.

For details or reservations visit: <https://stlouiscenter.org/event/dream-tour-iv/> or contact Trish Eblin at teblin@cruiseplanners.com or 937-561-4450.



For more information about these events, visit: stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/events/

YEAR-END APPEAL RECAP

St. Louis Center is incredibly grateful for the outpouring of generosity during our year-end match. Thanks to donors like you, we not only met the \$100,000 matching challenge from an anonymous donor, we more than doubled it, raising over **\$225,000!**

Because of your support, the residents of St. Louis Center can continue to lead healthy, meaningful, and fulfilling lives. We are deeply thankful for your belief in our people-centered mission, and for helping us provide the highest level of care to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Santa appeared at **Ugly Dog Distillery** in Chelsea to collect gifts for the St. Louis Center residents.

THE GIFT OF THE CARPENTER

Russell "Russ" Payeur passed away peacefully at his home in Saline, Michigan, on December 3, 2025. Russ and his wife Kay have been longtime supporters of the Center. One of the homes in the Village bears their name. The entire St. Louis Center community offers heartfelt condolences to Kay and her family.



loved. Quietly attentive rather than outwardly sentimental, he showed his care through presence, conversation, and steady support.

In retirement, Russ poured his creativity into woodworking, antique cars, maple syrup making, and restoring Model Ts—always doing things the right

Russ was born December 27, 1936, in Ann Arbor, he was the third of four children of Harry and Marie-Louise Payeur. After graduating from St. Thomas Catholic School, Russ served his country in the U.S. Army before returning home to work alongside his father and brother in the family business, A.H. Payeur & Sons Foundation Company, where he remained until his retirement in 1995.

Russ's greatest pride was his family. He shared 66 years of marriage with his beloved wife, Kay, and was a devoted father, grandfather, and great-grandfather who took genuine interest in the lives of those he

way, even when it was the hard way. His exquisitely detailed wooden models reflected both his craftsmanship and his generosity; many were donated to the St. Louis Center so others could experience the joy they brought him.

Russ found God in the woods, joy in honest work, and meaning in family. A mentor, leader, and friend, he will be remembered for the life he built with his hands, his heart, and his unwavering devotion to those he loved.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him.

St. Louis Center is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Your gifts are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Make a Gift Today

☐ **One-Time Gift:** ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ **\$357** - Help cover one resident's benevolent care costs for one day.

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

Monthly Gift: ☐ \$5 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other \$ _____

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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

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

THE POWER OF MUSIC THERAPY

St. Louis Center has partnered with Harmony Garden Music Therapy since 2015, providing services that improve the quality of life for all the residents.

Music therapy is a powerful and effective tool for supporting the well-being of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. At St. Louis Center, music therapist Renae Murphy of Harmony Garden Music Therapy Services works with residents through weekly group and individual sessions that promote communication, emotional expression, motor skills, and social connection.

Renae's pathway to board certification started with a four-year bachelor's degree, hundreds of observation hours, and a 1,200-hour clinical internship. After completing the steps, she successfully passed the certification exam. This rigorous preparation ensures that music therapy is not recreational, but evidence-based and intentional.

Each session is guided by clinical goals, whether that means practicing turn-taking, strengthening fine motor skills through instrument play, or building focus and memory through song writing. Residents often show increased

engagement and positive mood during music therapy, and staff regularly report improved attention and interaction on days when sessions are offered.

Music therapy also meets people where they are. Some residents thrive



Lori and Alex enjoy playing instruments in a group session.

in energetic group music making, while others benefit most from quiet, one-on-one sessions or instrumental improvisation. As a calm, neutral guide, the music therapist offers consistency and emotional safety, allowing clients to explore and express feelings without pressure or expectation.

While offered once a week, music therapy's benefits could grow even further with additional sessions. The impact is clear: music therapy nurtures joy, dignity, and meaningful connection, one note at a time.



Benefits of Music Therapy

- 1. Mental and Emotional** - reduces stress and anxiety, alleviates depression, enhances emotional expression, improves coping skills and boosts self-confidence.
- 2. Physical** - manages pain, improves motor skills, supports physiological regulation.
- 3. Cognitive and Social** - enhances memory and cognition, strengthens communication, builds social skills.

Music Therapy Methods

- 1. Receptive** - passively receiving music, either live or recorded, to promote relaxation, memory recall, or emotional processing.
- 2. Re-creative** - singing familiar songs or playing familiar melodies on an instrument, can build confidence and provide a sense of accomplishment.
- 3. Improvisational** - spontaneous music is created with the therapist, allowing for immediate emotional expression, non-verbal communication, and exploration of feelings in the moment.
- 4. Compositional** - actively creating new music, such as writing lyrics or composing melodies, to help process experiences and build self-esteem.

SUSAN LEWIS

December 24, 1961-December 8, 2025



Susan joined the St. Louis Center community on June 8, 2011, and spent fourteen and a half joyful years on our little corner of God's earth. She was happy, friendly, and deeply loving, with a smile and giggle that were truly infectious. Susan knew what she wanted and often expressed it with a cheerful "I like it," followed by a soft laugh. A true girly girl, she delighted in bridal magazines, Barbie dolls, and Disney coloring books. Susan remained strong until her final days, inspiring everyone who knew her to keep going and to do everything with a smile. She is survived by her sister, Sandra Mets. Thank you for loving Susan so well.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pasta Dinner with the Priests

March 5, 2026

St. Louis Center - Chelsea

Golf & Glory Outing

June 22, 2026

University of Michigan Golf Course - Ann Arbor

Memorial Golf Outing

August 15, 2026

Pierce Lake Golf Course - Chelsea

Learn more on our website:

stlouiscenter.org/have-fun-here/events/

VISIT: [STLOUISCENTER.ORG/ABOUT/NEWS/NEWSLETTER/ST-LOUIS-SPIRIT/](https://stlouiscenter.org/about/news/newsletter/st-louis-spirit/)



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REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS

Michael Angelo Chirco, who died on January 21, 2026, at age 80, will be remembered above all for his deep love of family and his extraordinary generosity. The heart of Michael's life was the family he built with his wife of 55 years, Mary. Together they created a home defined by love, laughter, and steadfast devotion. As a father to 6 children and "Papa" to 14 grandchildren, Michael's greatest joy was being present, supportive, and proud of those he loved. Family was not just important to him—it was the foundation of who he was.

That same spirit of love and responsibility extended outward into the wider community. A successful businessman and co-founder of MJC Homes, Michael believed that success carried an obligation to give back.



Mike (center) at the Dad & Lad Outing with his sons **Joseph** and **Michele**, and his wife **Mary** in 2021.

He lived by a simple philosophy of respect, humility, and treating others well, and he put those values into action through decades of quiet, faithful philanthropy. His generosity touched many organizations, but his commitment to St. Louis Center stood out as especially meaningful. For 28 years, Michael hosted the Annual Dad & Lad Golf Outing, helping raise more than \$1 million in

support of the Center and the people it serves.

Michael gave not for recognition, but because helping others was simply the right thing to do. His legacy lives on in his family, his community, and the countless lives strengthened by his generosity.

ALSO REMEMBERING:

Shirley Burg
John Del Signore
Julie Deppner
Pierina D'Orazio
Frank Forest
Carol Graustein
David Lamerson
David "Turk" Layher
Christopher Reardon
Ronnie Ross
Ernest Straughen

