



SPRING
2026

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

BUILDING MORE THAN SKILLS

For years, John's parents searched for a place where their son would not only be supported, but truly understood. They found that place at St. Louis Center.

John, 42, joined the Skill Building Program in 2025.

Since then, he has found structure, meaningful activities, and opportunities to connect with others. Whether assisting with Meals on Wheels,

participating in recycling projects, or spending time with friends, John is building confidence and independence in a caring environment.

"He enjoys being there. He enjoys the people," his father shared.

For John's family, the compassion shown by staff and residents has made all the difference. "People here are very caring," his mother said. "That is number one."

The Skill Building Program helps adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue learning,

growing, and engaging with the community while providing families peace of mind for the future.



John Madakacherry with his parents **Mary** and **John, Sr.**



A SHOWCASE OF TALENT

Residents of St. Louis Center took center stage for a joyful talent showcase made possible by Open Spot Theatre, a theater program for people of all abilities. After participating in engaging classes, residents were eager to share their skills with a talent show open to the public.

The show opened with a group performance of the song *True Colors*, followed by lively numbers including *Backstreet Bossa Nova* and a dance to *Dancing Queen*. Residents entertained the audience with dad jokes, heartfelt solos, and nostalgic favorites like the *Barney Theme Song* and *The Flintstones Theme*.

The showcase concluded with the entire cast performing *Shake a Tail Feather*, celebrating confidence, creativity, and the joy of sharing talents with the community.

A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Nearly 100 guests gathered **March 5th** for this year's Pasta with the Priests at St. Louis Center, enjoying an evening of delicious food, fellowship, and community. Staff transformed the gym into a festive Italian bistro where guests shared conversation with the priests who serve the Center each day and celebrated the community that helps residents live full and joyful lives.

Kitchen Manager Tracy Peters and the St. Louis Center kitchen staff prepared a wonderful selection of traditional pasta dishes, with gourmet pasta generously donated by Mamma Mucci's Pasta. Guests also enjoyed charcuterie boards assembled by Development Director Jackie Gordon, while Finance Director Carla Fields and her team created beautiful table decorations that made the evening feel extra special.

Families with children joined in the fun, and several young guests helped Fr. Satheesh draw winning tickets for the door prizes, adding excitement and smiles to the night. It was a wonderful evening of faith, friendship, and gratitude for all who support St. Louis Center.



Brian Bowman helped **Fr. Franklin, SdC**, serve beverages during the annual Pasta with the Priests dinner.



FROM FR. SATHEESH

Dear Friends,

At St. Louis Center, community is how we care for one another, celebrate one another, and walk alongside one another every day.

This spirit was beautifully visible during Night to Shine, when our residents stepped onto the red carpet and into an evening filled with joy, dignity, and celebration. It shone again as residents took the stage with confidence and courage during the Open Spot Theatre showcase, sharing their talents and reminding all of us that every person has gifts worth celebrating.

Community also comes alive in quieter moments. It is found in the patient preparation of a meal, the



kindness of a therapy dog's gentle presence, the laughter shared during Spirit Week, and the dedication of staff members who faithfully serve our residents with compassion and professionalism every day. It is present when students from Fr. Gabriel Richard High School spend a Lenten day building friendships with our residents, and when our own residents volunteer through Meals on Wheels to serve seniors in the wider community.

One story in this issue especially touched me: the life of Pat Wood. Having known hunger as a child, Pat made certain that no one ever left her home without a meal. Her love language was food. In many ways, her story reflects the heart of St. Louis Center itself. We strive not only to

meet physical needs, but to nourish the human spirit through belonging, friendship, faith, and love.

That mission would not be possible without you.

Whether you support St. Louis Center through prayers, volunteer service, donations, or simply by sharing our story with others, you are part of this community of care. Because of your generosity, our residents experience joyful opportunities, meaningful relationships, therapeutic programs, spiritual growth, and the dignity of knowing they are deeply valued.

Thank you for continuing to walk with us in this mission. Together, we are creating a place where every individual is welcomed, celebrated, and loved.

Fr. Satheesh

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

LENTEN DAY OF SERVICE AND JOY



Jerome worked with an FGR student who helped him prepare flower seeds for planting.

Lent called us to prayer and sacrifice, and students from Fr. Gabriel Richard High School lived that call on **March 6th** with a visit to St. Louis Center. Sophomores stepped away from the classroom to spend the day alongside residents in the Skill Building Program.

Working in small groups, students and residents painted, created wildflower seed bombs, decorated the atrium bulletin board, played games, and even took on the marshmallow challenge. Laughter and teamwork filled every space as new connections quickly formed.

The day concluded with Mass celebrated by Fr. Satheesh and a shared meal. What began as a day of service became something more, an experience of friendship, joy, and walking together in faith.

PROFILES OF GUANELLIAN STAFF

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES DEMAND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TO ENSURE DIGNIFIED, HIGH-QUALITY CARE FOR EVERY PERSON.

- WITH FAITH, LOVE, AND COMPETENCE 216

PREPARED TO SERVE WITH SKILL AND CARE



Family | Community

"New technologies and specialties that are emerging call [us] to a constant work of updating, and to an ongoing and gradual improvement of the quality of service." (*With Faith, Love, and Competence: Profile of the Guanellian Staff, 216*; a book inspired by the writings of St. Louis Guanella).

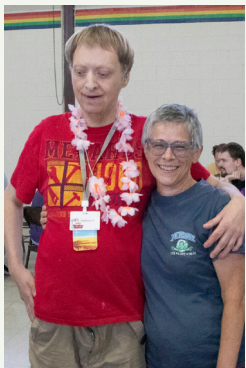
Please visit the website to view current staff openings.

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

Deb Markewicz retired from the St. Louis Center nursing department in 2023. She loved the residents and the Center so much that she now volunteers every other Thursday during the Skill Building Program. She sometimes helps in the nursing department, but she also enjoys helping the residents complete projects.



Robin Smith teaches safety care skills to all staff members including **Zandria Krasny**.

Before stepping into their roles at St. Louis Center, every new employee completes a comprehensive, hands-on training journey. From bookkeepers and social services specialists to cooks, direct care staff, and supervisors, each team member prepares to confidently serve the residents they will encounter every day.

Training begins with interactive online modules such as webinars, videos, and presentations that introduce essential knowledge and best practices. Staff members actively engage with the material and demonstrate their understanding through testing, building a strong foundation before moving forward.

From there, learning comes alive. In-person sessions place staff in real-world scenarios where they practice CPR, Safety Care techniques, and learn proper medication distribution procedures. These hands-on experiences equip staff with the skills and confidence needed to act quickly and appropriately.

Through this thorough and engaging process, St. Louis Center ensures that every staff member is ready, not just trained, but prepared to provide safe, compassionate care both on campus and out in the community.

GRATITUDE IN A SMALL WAY

Families of residents at St. Louis Center are deeply grateful for the care staff provide each day, from coordinating appointments and preparing meals to creating meaningful activities and outings. Just as impactful are the quieter moments: a word of reassurance, attention to detail, and the genuine companionship shared with residents.



Family members on hand to serve were (back row l to r) **Linda Recca, Pat Valaer, and Jennie Maynard**; (front row l to r) **Janet Birk, Christine Slominski, and Mary Cossentino**.

On **March 17th**, the Family Association expressed their appreciation by welcoming staff with coffee, snacks, and a small prize drawing. These simple gestures, and the kind words behind them, remind staff that their dedication is seen, valued, and makes a difference every day.



DELIVERING MORE THAN MEALS



Tony, Fr. David, Matthias and Bob had fun watching everyone dance.



Michael (in red), **Albert, Bradley, Cathy, David, Brad Crosier**, Direct Care Worker, **Jerome** and **Joe** (l to r), especially enjoyed the performers at the luncheon.

THEIR NIGHT TO SHINE

St. Louis Center residents eagerly look forward each year to participating in Night to Shine, the Tim Tebow Foundation's global prom-like celebration for people with special needs. Hosted locally by 2|42 Community Church in Ann Arbor, the event gives residents a special evening of joy and celebration.

Staff from Social Services, program teams, and Development help residents get ready with hair, makeup, dresses, suits, and ties. After praying the Rosary together on campus, the group heads to Ann Arbor where they are welcomed with corsages, boutonnieres, crowns, and a walk down the red carpet. After dinner, residents filled the dance floor until the very last song. **Friday, February 13th** was truly their Night to Shine!

Each weekday, St. Louis Center residents volunteer with the Meals on Wheels program through the Chelsea Senior Center, delivering not only meals, but also kindness and connection to local seniors.

With the support of Direct Care Worker Brad Crosier, residents faithfully complete their delivery routes with smiles and a strong sense of purpose. Brad's patience and dedication help make this partnership a success, and the Chelsea Senior Center greatly values their commitment.

On **January 21st**, Brad accompanied seven residents to the organization's annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, where they enjoyed food, fellowship, and entertainment. While the celebration was special, the true reward comes from serving others and making a meaningful difference in the community each day.



SPIRIT WEEK BRIGHTENS WINTER DAYS



Hayley Jula and Marie Ruiz, Direct Care Workers, relaxed with **Albert** and **Cathy** on Pajama Day.

Gray skies and chilly temperatures didn't stand a chance against the energy at St. Louis Center, where Skill Building Program Coordinator Haylie Gottschalk brought a burst of fun with Spirit Week, **February 23rd–27th**.

Each day invited residents and staff to jump into a new theme, and they fully embraced the fun. Pajama Day turned the halls into a parade of cozy comfort, while Hat Day topped things off with everything from favorite caps to bold, eye-catching creations. By Wacky Wednesday, mismatched outfits and playful styles had everyone laughing, and Dress to Impress brought a touch of flair and confidence to the middle of winter. The week wrapped up with SLC Spirit Day, as pride in the community shone through in every outfit.

From start to finish, the creativity and enthusiasm of both residents and staff transformed an ordinary winter week into something joyful, colorful, and full of life.

SUMMER GOLF PREVIEW

SAVE THE DATE



6.22.26



Have you always wanted to play a round at the University of Michigan Blue Course? This is your opportunity. Register to golf and choose sponsorships here →



JOIN US FOR THE 4TH ANNUAL SEAN BRIAN ASHLINE FOUNDATION GOLF OUTING



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MORE DETAILS

4 Person Scramble • Live Music • Drink Tickets
Raffle Auction • Closest to the Pin • Dinner & Many Other Fun Activities!



SCAN ME

ITALIAN AMERICAN DELEGATES GOLF OUTING

When: Monday, July 13th

Time: 9:00am

Where: Pine Knob Golf Club, 5580 Waldron Rd., Clarkston, MI 48348

Dust off your clubs and grab your golfing buddies. You won't want to miss this event. The golf is spectacular.

August 5th 29TH ANNUAL DAD & LAD OUTING

In Memory of Michael A. Chirco

When: Wednesday, August 5th

Time: 9:30am

Where: Twin Lakes Golf & Swim Club
455 Twin Lakes Dr., Oakland, MI 48348

The Dad & Lad Golf Outing was created in 1997 to encourage father and son camaraderie.



August 15th MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING



When: Saturday, August 15th **Time:** 9:00am

Where: Pierce Lake Golf Course, 1175 S. Main St., Chelsea, MI 48118

This year, help us to honor the memory of Ellie Unterbrink. She loved the outdoors, golfing, her family, and assisting her beloved husband Ken with his Knights of Columbus work especially for St. Louis Center. This course offers an amazing backdrop for a round with friends.



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



THE JOY OF GIVING BEGAN EARLY

Lent is a season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. At St. Mary Star of the Sea in Jackson, parishioners embraced that call on the first Sunday of Lent by supporting the work of St. Louis Center.

A large jar placed near the altar quickly filled as members of the congregation came forward to give. Even the youngest parishioners eagerly stepped up, dropping in their small offerings with quiet pride, simple acts that spoke volumes about hearts already learning generosity and compassion. Every gift, large or small, helped support St. Louis Center residents and the programs that enriched their daily lives.



HER GREATEST RECIPE WAS LOVE

Patricia "Pat" Wood, age 98, passed away peacefully on March 26, 2026 at Vista Grande Villa in Jackson, Michigan.

She was born on January 3, 1928 in County Derry, Ireland. She married Bill Robbins in 1945 when he was serving in the U.S. Navy. Bill's ship returned to America that year. Pat followed in 1947 on the USNS Henry Gibbins, which was serving as a transport for Irish war brides.

Pat often spoke of the emotion she felt when the ship passed "Lady Liberty" as she arrived in America. When she moved to Chelsea to begin a life with her new husband, she was unfamiliar with American food and customs. The Robbins family and the entire Chelsea community embraced her with open arms and she became an American citizen in 1962.

Pat was a hard worker her entire life. In a generation when most women stayed home and raised their families, Pat always held a job outside the home. From running a restaurant to working in food service, she was never idle.



In 1960, Pat began working in the kitchen at St. Louis Center when it first opened as St. Louis School

for Exceptional Boys. Over nearly 30 years of dedicated service, Pat became a beloved member of the staff, known for both her tireless work ethic and the warmth she shared with

residents and coworkers alike. She was also responsible for bringing Ginny Wheaton onto the kitchen staff. Together, Pat and Ginny devoted more than 70 combined years to preparing meals with love and serving them with warmth, kindness, and joy.

Perhaps it was because she had known hunger as a child that Pat's love language became food. She was determined that no one would ever leave her home without a meal. Whether serving residents, coworkers, family, or friends, Pat understood that food was more than nourishment; it was comfort, hospitality, and love made visible.

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 \$ _____

\$411 - Help cover one resident's benevolent care costs for one day.

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

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Spring Newsletter 2026

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

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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

PET THERAPY BRINGS COMFORT AND CONNECTION

Since 2013, therapy dogs have brought comfort, companionship, and countless smiles to the residents of St. Louis Center. What began as occasional visits has grown into a meaningful and anticipated part of life for the people who call the Center home. The gentle presence of these specially trained dogs offers far more than entertainment; it provides emotional support, encourages social interaction, and creates moments of calm, joy, and connection.

For many residents, pet therapy days are among the highlights of the week. The excitement begins long before the dogs arrive. Residents gather eagerly, asking questions and waiting patiently for their turn to pet, hug, or sit beside the visiting animal. Fergus, the current therapy dog, accompanied by his trained handler, enters calmly and naturally through the doors, offering affection without judgment and companionship without expectation.

While the interactions may appear simple on the surface, the benefits of pet therapy are significant. Research has shown that spending time with therapy animals can reduce stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure, improve mood, and encourage communication. At St. Louis Center, staff members often notice residents becoming more engaged and expressive during visits. Individuals who are normally quiet may begin to talk or smile more. Others who struggle with social interaction often become more

comfortable participating in conversations when a dog is nearby.

Pet therapy can also encourage physical movement and sensory engagement. Residents practice gentle motor skills while brushing a dog's fur.

For some individuals, the calming rhythm of petting a dog can help regulate emotions and provide reassurance during difficult moments.

Perhaps most importantly, therapy dogs create opportunities for unconditional connection. The dogs do not focus on disabilities, limitations, or challenges. They simply respond to kindness, attention, and affection. That acceptance can be incredibly meaningful for individuals who may struggle with communication or emotional expression.

Over the years, many special bonds have formed between residents and the visiting dogs. Some residents remember the dogs' names and personalities from visit to visit, greeting them like old friends. Others light up at the chance to sit quietly



Kyle and Matthew share some time with Fergus.

beside a calm companion, enjoying a peaceful moment together. Even residents who are hesitant at first often gradually warm up, eventually reaching out for a gentle pat or leaning in close for comfort.

The success of the program reflects the dedication of the volunteers and handlers who generously share their time and their animals with the St. Louis Center community. Their commitment has helped make pet therapy an important part of the Center's therapeutic and recreational programming for more than a decade.

For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, meaningful human connection is essential, but sometimes healing and happiness also arrive on four paws. At St. Louis Center, the therapy dogs have become more than visitors. They are trusted companions, loyal friends, and a reminder that comfort can often be found in the simplest moments: a wagging tail, a gentle nuzzle, and the unconditional love of a dog.

Since 2013, St. Louis Center has benefited from partnerships with a variety of pet therapy programs and dedicated volunteers who have shared their time and animals with residents. Today, **Therapaws Pet Therapy** continues that legacy, helping create meaningful moments of joy and emotional support throughout the community.



Behavioral and Emotional Care

- **De-escalates sensory crises** by offering grounding, non-judgmental tactile comfort.
- **Reduces repetitive pacing** or agitation through soothing, repetitive petting motions.
- **Lowers transition anxiety** during shift changes or modifications to daily facility routines.
- **Diminishes operational depression** caused by institutional living or long-term separation from family.

Life Skills and Autonomy

- **Builds daily routines** through scheduled visits and taking turns.
- **Reinforces personal boundaries** by teaching residents how to read and respect an animal's body language.
- **Fosters independent choices** when residents decide how to interact during sessions.
- **Improves ambulatory movement** as residents navigate the facility while walking or playing with a therapy dog.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Golf & Glory Outing

June 22, 2026
University of Michigan Golf Course - Ann Arbor

IAD Golf Outing

July 13, 2026
Pine Knob Golf Club - Clarkston

Sean Brian Ashline Foundation Outing

July 20, 2026
Lakeland Hills Golf Course - Brighton

Dad & Lad Outing

August 5, 2026
Twin Lakes Golf & Swim Club - Oakland

Memorial Golf Outing

August 15, 2026
Pierce Lake Golf Course - Chelsea

Fall Harvest Fest

September 13, 2026
Italian American Banquet Center - Livonia

Randazzo Men's Social

September 17, 2026
Randazzo Fresh Market - Macomb

Fall Dinner Auction

November 14, 2026
St. Mary of Chelsea - Chelsea

Learn more on our website:

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

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REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS

Gerard "Jerry" Lee Hammerschmidt Sr., a cherished husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, uncle, and friend, passed away peacefully on March 20, 2026, in Venice, FL.

Born on July 31, 1934, in Detroit, MI, and spending the majority of his years in the close-knit community of Chelsea, MI, Jerry was known for his warm smile, kind spirit, and the joy he brought to those around him. He was deeply involved in both his church and community, generously sharing his charitable spirit through his work with St. Louis Center and the Knights



of Columbus, where he served as Grand Knight and contributed as an active board member for many years.

Jerry was the pillar of his family, a devoted husband to his loving wife, Cindy, with whom he shared an enduring love story spanning 60 remarkable years since their marriage on June 12, 1965.

As we bid farewell to Jerry, we celebrate a life rich in love, laughter, and memories. He will forever be etched in the hearts of those he leaves behind, not just as a man who loved life, but as one who made life lovely for all who had the privilege of knowing him. Jerry's legacy is a blueprint for a well-lived life.

ALSO REMEMBERING:

Christine Augustine
Gary DesChenes
Patricia Dufek
Shirley Pastir
Rosa Paulus
Patricia "Pat" Wood

