

St. Ann Center's SEASONS OF LIFE

People of all ages and abilities spend the day at St. Ann Center because of your support. You made these stories of our joyful intergenerational community possible.

LANGUAGE OF LOVE

In this day of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, there's a more basic kind of communication going on at St. Ann Center. Stein Campus volunteer **Maggie Cary** and adult day care client **Dragana Tomac** have developed a language all their own.

"I've come to understand her moods and what she's trying to say from her expressions and sounds she makes," Maggie explained how a smile, a coo or a knitted brow tell her if Dragana is happy, anxious or sad. "After 11 years together, we understand each other."

Dragana was born with cerebral palsy, blindness, seizure disorder and cognitive disabilities. At 37, she's developmentally 18 months old. According to her mother, Ruth, "We toured several places looking for help with Dragana's care. St. Ann Center is so beautiful and welcoming, we were certain she would do well here."

Maggie got to know Dragana when she began spoon-feeding her at lunchtime. Soon, they were inseparable. "We go all over the building—inside and out," Maggie said of how she takes Dragana, in her wheelchair, around the building as she runs errands. "It's stimulating for her and good exercise for me." Dragana has also made fast friends with other St. Ann Center clients. "She

lights up when she hears her buddy Erica's voice," Maggie added.

Quiet as Dragana is, she loves being the center of attention, mom Ruth said. "She feels pampered when she gets her baths at St. Ann Center. And she thrives on the one-to-one communication she has with Maggie."

According to Maggie, the pleasure is hers. "Dragana brings out the best in everyone," she said. "It's pure love."

Because of you, Dragana spends her days with people who value and respect her.



Check out Maggie and Dragana and more of their story in our Gala video: StAnnCenter.org/gala.



Dear Friend,

It's been a long year for all of us, filled with frustrations, confusion and worry. I don't think I'm alone in saying, I didn't expect 2020 would be like this!

While there are no easy solutions to a global pandemic, there are ways that can make it easier to live with. Personally, I've made time to take long walks, meditate and pray—a lot. It helps me remember who's really in control.

I've also found myself asking: what can COVID-19 teach us? And after the crisis has passed, what lessons can we learn and take with us going forward? I've found some of these answers right here at St. Ann Center:

Kindness: You don't have to go far on our campuses to see people supporting one another. From an air fist bump between a child and teacher, to a CNA taking time to talk with a client who seems anxious. By the looks of things, kindness is more infectious than COVID-19.

Teamwork: We may have to be six feet apart, but the feeling of togetherness at St. Ann Center is stronger than ever. I'm heartened to see children, clients, parents, caregivers and staff wearing masks and patiently going through the screening process in our doorway. As one parent told me, "We're all in this together." (The cute photo above was taken before COVID-19.)

Creativity: I see countless examples of flexibility and imagination from our activities staff. Contact games like ring toss and volleyball have been temporarily replaced with trivia and storytelling. Our childcare kids even managed to put on a talent show for the adults who watched them through their classroom windows.

Optimism: The road has been bumpy for St. Ann Center this year. But, no matter how deep the pothole, I've been comforted to know our Board Chair Tim Sullivan is there for us. During our three-month closure and our reopening, he's been a sounding board, a mentor and an encourager, reminding us, "All will be well."

Gratitude: St. Ann Center's clients constantly inspire me. No matter their life situation and the challenges they face, they continue to be kind, loving, positive and grateful. It's that kind of attitude that will see us through difficult times like these and remind us to appreciate the silver linings.

Back-to-School 2020 Style



Students, ages 5 to 12, find a welcoming place for remote learning at both St. Ann Center campuses, while their parents go to work.

As Milwaukee school officials chalk up plans for students to learn off-site, in schools or both this fall, St. Ann Center is working to create safe spaces and care scenarios for virtual learners.

"We honestly don't know what we would have done if St. Ann Center didn't have the option of our child doing virtual learning here," said Monica Yarn, Intergenerational Activities Supervisor and Volunteer Coordinator for the Bucyrus Campus. "We're both working parents, so one of us would have had to quit our job to be home with him. I know other parents are facing the same situation."

To support young students and their families, both St. Ann Center campuses have expanded their programs for school-agers to accommodate children doing virtual learning for all or part of the day. The center provides access to Wi-Fi; breakfast, lunch and a snack, as needed; and supervision by certified childcare teachers.

Monica's son David is 7 years old and a second-grader. **"Being able to bring him to St. Ann Center has been a blessing,"** she said. "Knowing he'll have structure and help from people who care about his education gives us peace of mind."

The Water's Fine

Ask Bucyrus Campus Summer Campers to name the best part of their week, and they're bound to say "swimming!" Not only is it cool to make a splash, it's a great way to exercise with friends.

Besides wanting kids to have fun, a key reason the Bucyrus Campus includes a pool is to teach vital swimming skills.

USA Swimming Foundation data shows 64% of Black children, 45% of Hispanic children and 40% of white children have little or no swimming ability.

Aquatic Director Kristen Schmalfeldt is excited, both by the beautiful warm-water pool and the enthusiasm of the children. "It's awesome seeing their faces light up—none of them were afraid of the water," she said. "I'm excited about the opportunity to get more kids into the pool and involved in swimming lessons so they're safer around the water."



Childcare Assistant Director Hannah Vertovec helps students into flotation vests before swimming lessons begin.



Aquatic Director Kristen Schmalfeldt makes swimmers feel comfortable and confident in the water.

Plexiglas Walls Connect the Generations

Walls are typically meant to keep people apart. But St. Ann Center has come up with an ingenious way to use walls to bring the generations together.

The current pandemic has made it difficult to come up with intergenerational activities that are both fun and safe. "Research shows older adults and children benefit socially, emotionally and physically when they regularly interact," said Sr. Edna. "We had to get creative to keep making those magical connections happen while social distancing."

The solution: two 4-foot by 8-foot Plexiglas panels, stationed in the Stein Campus indoor Intergenerational Park. With adults on one side and children on the other, the generations can play tic-tac-toe and draw pictures together



Kids and adults get creative, on opposite sides of a Plexiglas panel, drawing an intergenerational village.

using washable paint and markers. They can even make music, pounding out a beat on either side of the glass, using soft mallets.

The idea for the Plexiglas panels came from Paul McComas, a trustee for the Camille Lonstorf Trust, which funded their construction. Paul is a Chicago-based author, filmmaker and musician who has maintained close ties with his hometown of Milwaukee.

Entertainment Goes Outside



Band shell performances were livestreamed for safe online viewing by the community.

No Summerfest...no Wisconsin State Fair...no fun! Except around St. Ann Center. Unlike most entertainment venues that remained dark due to the ongoing pandemic, the Bucyrus Campus' Indaba Band Shell found a way for the show to go on.

This summer was to have marked the beginning of Indaba Nights, a public entertainment series at the 125-seat band shell. Since COVID-19 prevented large

gatherings, a scaled-back schedule of events was livestreamed, so the entire community could tune in virtually on St. Ann Center's Facebook and YouTube pages.

"We know how hungry people are for entertainment right now," said Gloria Miller, St. Ann Center's special events director. "The livestreamed concerts were one way to bring music to them safely and give them a taste of what's in store for next year."

Performers didn't lack for an audience, though. The events were turned into fun intergenerational activities for St. Ann Center's day care children and clients. Adults were carefully spaced in chairs under the band shell's protective awning. The kids claimed spots behind them on the grassy hillside overlooking the stage.

Kicking off the events was the Nite 'n Day Band, playing a mix of R&B, gospel, Motown and smooth jazz. The band leader, Bobby Jiles, has close ties to St. Ann Center. He's a personal care worker in the Akachi Adult Day Care Unit.

"It's a little like being in Heaven," he laughed. "I have a chance to work with these wonderful clients, and I can use my talents to entertain them, too."

Music Changes Its Tune



Unable to sing Katy Perry's "Roar" safely, the choir danced to the pop-rock hit instead.

St. Ann Center has been using music for years to help children and adults express themselves through song. But new safety precautions amid COVID-19 have required music therapist Hannah Goodness to be extra creative.

"Our Stein Campus adult choir was disappointed when their spring concert was canceled," she said of the performance that was scratched due to St. Ann Center's "safer at home" closure. When the choir got back together, they found singing in masks was problematic.

The answer was obvious—dance! "We decided as a group to choreograph the songs and dance to recorded music," she said. They agreed chair dancing would be best. "That way, our friends who use wheelchairs wouldn't be left out."



Planning music therapy with the children has had its challenges, too. To maximize safety, only teachers and children are allowed inside the classrooms. This time, the solution was Zoom. "The kids ages 3 and up did well, watching and listening to me on the class laptop," Hannah said. And pleasant weather made it possible for Hannah to move some music sessions outside to the patio.

Can We Talk?

For as long as there've been men and women, each gender has needed to get together and talk. At St. Ann Center, there's an opportunity to do just that in weekly support groups.

"Our women's group meets in the chapel," said Director of Pastoral Care Rodican Rose Bonn. More than a time to chitchat, "this group gives the women permission to go deeper and open up."

Topics range from health concerns and handling stress to issues with their family or group home. "We also ask, 'What's right with me?'" Rodican added, "We talk about empowerment and hope."

A group regular, Jennel Zinkiewicz, appreciates the chance to voice her opinions. "I'm free to talk about whatever is on my mind," she said. Group member Marilyn Santiago agrees. "Among women, you can talk more freely about your feelings," she said.



Support group (meeting before COVID-19) is a place where trust is nurtured.

In the men's group, topics go beyond sports, cars and politics. Recently, a client, in the group for the first time, spoke about his wife and children. Huntington's disease makes it difficult for him to speak clearly. Even so, the men waited patiently for him to share his thoughts.

"They instinctively knew what this gentleman needed from the group" Rodican said. **"Being heard is a precious gift."**



Follow us on Facebook at
[Fb.com/StAnnCenter](https://www.facebook.com/StAnnCenter)

She Makes Masks Fun

Along with crayons, finger paints and picture books, face masks have become a classroom staple. And staff member Gloria Miller is making sure St. Ann Center children are well covered.

The Bucyrus Campus special events director and an accomplished seamstress, Gloria spent much of this past spring making face masks for healthcare workers on the front lines of the pandemic. As she sewed, "I noticed there weren't

many patterns designed for children," she said. So, she downsized an adult pattern to fit preschool faces.



So far, Gloria has made 30 masks for St. Ann Center children over the age of two. "I picked out fabrics with colors and patterns I knew youngsters would enjoy wearing," she said. The cotton

cloth creations are adorned with kid-friendly prints, including cartoon characters, animals, dinosaurs, racecars, trucks and princesses.

Teachers helped their students select a mask and demonstrated how to put them on and take them off. "The kids were tickled to have a mask all their own," Gloria said. "They'd seen their parents and older siblings wearing them, so it made them feel grown-up to wear one, too. Plus, it's easy to



Gloria Miller puts her sewing skills to work making kid-sized masks for St. Ann Center day care children.

pretend to be a superhero in a mask.

"This has been a fun project," added Gloria, who remembers sitting on thick phone books at the sewing machine, at age 6, to create clothes for her dolls, under her mother's watchful eye. "And it's important as we face this virus together."

This project also hits close to home. Gloria has family members who were diagnosed with COVID-19 in March, including one who was hospitalized and has since recovered. Gloria sees her sewing as a way to make a difference during this challenging time.



Little ones find wearing a mask is easy when it's tailor-made to fit them.

"I'm closing in on 400 masks," she said of the many she's made for her extended family, friends and coworkers at St. Ann Center, either for free or for the cost of materials. **"It's a labor of love."**

Gala Dreams Came True

When the coronavirus outbreak hit the Milwaukee area in mid-March, it also forced many southeastern Wisconsin nonprofits that traditionally hold vital fundraising events to postpone their galas.

But St. Ann Center decided to move ahead with its popular Dream Together Gala scheduled for August, 21, and held it online—complete with a silent auction. Thanks to you, our donors, the event was a big hit, raising more than \$150,000 to give children a safe, nurturing place to learn and grow, and help elders and adults with disabilities discover a renewed sense of purpose.



Meet a Fiercely Creative Woman

For the world, and **Natalie Fiske**, in particular, 2020 has been a year of firsts.

A client at the Stein Campus, Natalie was born with cerebral palsy and a spine disorder that requires her to use a wheelchair. But that hasn't stopped her from pursuing her dreams...even during quarantine.

During the spring safer at home order, Natalie launched her own YouTube Channel, dubbed "Natalie Fierce," that celebrates the little things in daily life. She invites her followers to "join me as I take on challenges and share my struggles and talents. Every day is something new from my imagination."



Natalie Fiske has a lot of talent at her fingertips. She's both an artist and a YouTube star.

Some of her videos are silly—saluting World Emoji Day and Cow Appreciation Day. Others take a more serious look at what it's like living with a disability.

Another of Natalie's firsts was creating a beautiful pop art painting to be auctioned at St. Ann Center's Dream Together Gala. An accomplished artist, Natalie has a hard time gripping a brush, so she paints with her right index finger. Typically, she works with an art coach by her side, who sets up her paint palette and gives her advice on design.

"Because of the virus, my art coach couldn't come over to help me—so, this painting is the first I completed on my own," Natalie said of the colorful acrylic that took her more than two months to finish. "I am very happy about how it turned out!"

Her YouTube channel's tagline says it all: "Hunting for happiness every day...and killing it!"



You can still enjoy our 35-minute Virtual Gala program from start to finish at **StannCenter.org/gala**.

And it's not too late to donate.

Our thanks to our generous sponsors, donors, volunteers and friends who made this unforgettable event so successful!

Nursing Students Bring TLC

Adapting to
 a new world
Inside...

Plus,
 visit our remote-learning
 classroom!

STEIN CAMPUS

2801 E. Morgan Ave.
 Milwaukee, WI 53207
 (414) 977-5000

BUCYRUS CAMPUS

2450 W. North Ave.
 Milwaukee, WI 53205
 (414) 210-2450



To update your mailing preferences:
 (414) 977-5064 or sselz@stanncenter.org



Nursing students from MSOE conduct
 vision screenings with clients
 on the Stein Campus Veranda.

**Students from the Milwaukee School of
 Engineering nursing program have been
 visiting St. Ann Center clients for years—
 and they weren't going to let a pandemic
 stop them from continuing the tradition.**



Despite COVID-19, it's important future
 nurses get in-person experience at
 organizations like St. Ann Center.

Their most recent visit focused on helping
 adult clients at the Stein Campus stay
 healthy during this challenging time. They
 discussed handwashing and dental care and
 conducted vision screenings.

According to Professor of Nursing Robin
 Gates, it's been difficult finding places for
 their students to get in-person experience
 working with clients due to COVID-19 closures
 and lockdowns.

"We're thrilled that St. Ann Center welcomed
 us in," she said. "We're trying to teach our
 students that there are many opportunities
 for nurses, outside of the hospital or clinic
 setting. They also have an important role to
 play in community service organizations like
 St. Ann Center."

YOUR REFERRAL IS OUR BEST COMPLIMENT!

Refer your friends, family, neighbors or anyone else
 to St. Ann Center and receive a \$50 referral bonus.

**You can earn a \$50 check for
 every child or adult you refer who:**

- enrolls in and attends our childcare or adult
 day program at least three days a week for
 one month
- enrolls in and stays in our overnight respite
 for a minimum of five days in a month

The bonus program applies only to referrals made
 after Jan. 1, 2020. The referred person must provide
 St. Ann Center with your name and valid email
 address at time of enrollment. Referral payments
 will be made for the first ten qualified referrals for a
 maximum total of \$500 in a calendar year.

Questions?

Contact Dayo Akande (414) 977-5004