

“We commit to actions that deepen our relationships of communion, wherever we are... We co-create structures and practices that challenge, free, and unite us... We commit ourselves to further systemic change. We are educators in all that we are and do, exploring concrete avenues to eliminate root causes of injustice. We are present with people at the peripheries and collaborate to end all forms of discrimination, inequity, and violence.”

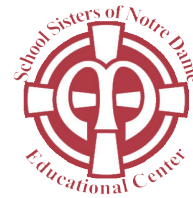
SSND, *The Call of the 25th General Chapter December 2023*

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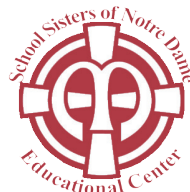
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 EDUCATIONAL CENTER**

87-04 88th Avenue, Woodhaven, NY 11421

Save the Date!
 Sunday, October 6, 2024

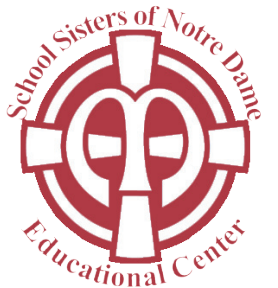


Annual Harvest Festival

Join us in honoring
 The Ladies of Charity of SJU
 and Neil Giannelli

SSND Educational Center

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SPRING 2024

Friends,

Communion. Co-create. Commit. Collaborate. Concrete. Change. These are all powerful words that speak to who we are and what we strive to do at SSND Educational Center. Sometimes, though, they can feel like just words. Of course, our staff, board, and volunteers consider ourselves educators in all that we are and do. However, in my first school year at this Center, I have learned that the students—the women who come to the Center to learn—hold the power to teach us and guide us into much deeper relationships of Communion than we could have ever imagined teaching THEM. In very real ways, **the students are the agents of concrete change.** We are committed to being present, and we provide safe space for growth and empowerment, but our students collaborate with us and with each other to drive the beautiful changes that challenge, free, and unite us. What a beautiful and humbling thing that is to witness, to embrace, and to support.



forward. At the core of it all is gratitude. Gratitude for every lesson, every challenge, every helping hand. It's what keeps me grounded and hopeful.

-- Sema Charan, GED

“We want to give our gratitude to all the people who support this center; the opportunity to learn English as a second language is very important to us. It has made a big change in our lives, professionally and personally in our present and future. The bonds we’ve formed in the classroom will forever unite us. Let us continue to strive for excellence, embrace diversity, and seize every opportunity that comes our way.”

--Amanda Lopez, ESOL Level 5

“We have been trying very hard to learn English. We know that we have made many mistakes, but we keep trying. We like our class and try to help each other so that we can have more confidence when we speak.”

--Melissa Razick, ESOL Introductory Level

Amazing, aren't they? I hope and pray that YOU—our sponsors, donors, community partners, grantors, and Circle of Friends — are extremely proud of your support of and affiliation with the School Center of Notre Dame Educational Center. YOUR generosity allows our staff and students to fill each day with hope—hope that brings powerful change. Through our programs, events, and initiatives, we all continue to grow in community.

Please visit our new website, www.ssndecwomens.org, to learn more about past and upcoming events, and to see more photos of our thankful, smiling students!!! And don't forget to consider joining our Circle of Friends. Just \$10 per month gives us reliable, predictable income that directly impacts our sustainability!!!!

With warm and deep gratitude,

Francine E. Poppo
 Executive Director



This year, at our closing ceremony on June 5, where 106 students received certificates of accomplishment and completion, one student from each class wrote, practiced, and delivered a speech that truly exemplifies the depth of growth that can happen when we ALL come together to listen and co-create an environment of collaboration, unity, and change.

“The most beautiful thing I learned this year was all about the cultures, languages, and backgrounds of my classmates I never would have met if we did not come to this Center to learn together.”

-- Andra Castro, ESOL Level 2

“I’ve been blessed with kindness from friends [classmates] Ann, Stephanie, Monica, Ngozi, Tahirah, Eva, Ling, Giannina, Katherine, and Juliet. Their acts of kindness remind me of the goodness in people, urging me to pay it

SHUFFLE INTO SPRING

Shuffle into Spring 2024 was a tremendous success! Thank you to our wonderful Development Committee, who worked tirelessly for several months to create yet another beautiful event at Russo's on the Bay. Thank you also to our student speakers, Julia Jimenez and Giannina Lopez, who shared important moments on their journeys. We also truly appreciate Emily Wenke and Sophie Bowers of SJU's Delta Phi Epsilon. They donated and created beautiful, floral centerpieces.

With over 200 guests, we celebrated, danced, played radio bingo, sold raffles, sold more raffles, and honored two esteemed members of our greater community: Steve Carbone and Sheila Lewandowski. Steve has been president of Trans Air International Air Cargo for several years and maintains active membership in several JFK benevolent and service organizations, including JFK Rotary, Semantics, and JFK Chamber of Commerce. Sheila has been the Executive Director of The Chocolate Factory Theater in Long Island City for 29 years and remains very active in advocating for artists and arts education throughout NYC and NYS. Both Steve and Sheila have supported our Center for many years, and we are so pleased to honor their active presence in their respective Queens communities.



MOTOWN

Aqueous Solutions
Chocolate Factory Theatre
JFK Rotary
Overton and Co Air Services
Resorts World NYC
Royal Waste Management
SSND Atlantic-Midwest Province
UBS The Poppo Group
The Semantics
Trans Air International Air Cargo
WORKS Little League

DISCO

Karen Cannariato

POP

City Waste Services of New York
Ladies of Charity of SJU

OLDIES

Fifth and Fine
LMN Printing of NY
Elaine and Joseph Hauffe
Elizabeth Hill
Jane Loughlin
Eileen Maguire
Maria Necci
Barbara Pryor
Wanda Sample

CENTER HAPPENINGS



- **CLOSING CEREMONY:** Congratulations!!! We are all so proud of you! On June 5, our Center had our closing ceremony. Once again, the Ladies of Charity of SJU did a beautiful job of providing a reception for all! 75 of our students have already registered to return in the Fall. Wahoo to these students for the following accomplishments!
 - 106 women received completion certificates for persevering in our classes for the entire school year.
 - Carolyn Menendez received her GED diploma in Oct. 2023.
 - Ngozi Okpako received her GED diploma in May 2024.
 - Sema Charan, Julie Codwell, Ling Liu, Eva Paterek, Nipa Sarmin, Tahira Zaman, Giannina Lopez, and Annmarie Pariag passed at least one section/subject of the GED exam.
 - Nargis Jahan, Julia Jimenez, and Diana Peralta received American Citizenship.
 - Six students in our ESOL programs received awards for excellent attendance.
- **NEW WEBSITE!:** Our new website, www.ssndecwomens.org, is live!!! We invite you to browse, view, and comment!



- **OUTREACH:** In an effort to empower women across the globe while also caring for the climate, our students, with Sister Cathy Feeney's guidance, participated in a sneaker and shoe drive, collecting 70 pairs for *Soles for Souls*. Our collection diverted 162 pounds from landfills and created \$1176.50 of economic opportunity for families and communities around the world.

A Heartfelt Thank You and Blessings on Your Journeys

The students, staff, volunteers, and board members would like to thank Sister Pat Ferrick and Sister Mary Lennon for sharing their gifts and talents with our Center! We will miss you both very much!



Sister Pat Ferrick, SSND: As a resident at the Center for the past four years, Sister Pat has served us in many capacities. From being a Spanish language translator for so many of our students to accompanying these same students to appointments to filling in on a moment's notice as a volunteer receptionist to being a postal delivery person, Sister Pat has worn many hats, and she has worn them well! Sister Pat will be moving to Watermark in Bridgeport, CT and will be living with many of her beloved Sisters.

Sister Mary Lennon, SSND: Sister Mary Lennon has been a member of our team, both as a financial consultant and as a Board member for many years! She has been an absolute treasure. The unique gifts and insights Mary brings to our Center will be sorely missed. However, we are very blessed that she will be continuing to serve on our Finance Committee, where she will offer valuable expertise on budget planning.



- **NEW CLASS:** Thanks to Sister Cathy Feeney, Maureen Blaine, and assistance from Neil Giannelli, our new Citizenship Preparation class was a resounding success! 10 students from our ESOL program took the class, and two earned their American citizenship after attending!



- **FIELD TRIP:** Sr Eileen Trainor, our GED science teacher, planned a trip for the GED students to the AMNH where students saw the space show, "Worlds Beyond Earth." Almost all GED students attended, and it was a wonderful educational and social opportunity. Some students had never been to a museum, so those dinosaur bones were a sight!



- **TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION:** Our teachers succeeded in integrating technology into all our classes every week. Students in the ESOL zoom writing class wrote and presented autobiographical essays, practicing their writing, speaking, and presentation skills.

- **VISIT WITH CONGRESSWOMAN NYDIA VELAZQUEZ:** The congresswoman toured our Center and spoke with ALL classes regarding the importance of education, speaking English, and creating opportunities for oneself and one's family.

