



Director's Message:

With eight months already behind me I marvel at how much there has been to learn about the many rewards of doing this work. The transition in leadership happened (and I'm STILL learning!) so smoothly because of the support I receive from Sister Betty and our Board of Directors. It remains on my mind daily to uphold both the legacy of what Sister Betty created and the mission of the Sisters of St. Francis.

By far my greatest joy in this work is getting to know each of the children we serve and teaching them every day. The teachers and I get to know their moods, their strengths, what motivates them, and what they struggle with. Each, with their own personality, seem to need something different from us. But the common thread that I see in each of them is how they respond to being loved and respected. It is an honor to be able to help them find their strengths, celebrate their small victories and to help build their confidence.

In another facet of my responsibilities I've learned how challenging it can be to maintain what is needed to keep this good work happening, especially in this day when financial strains are present for almost every organization. We are so grateful for the grant funding we have received and we value each and every personal donation that is made to help the children, but as our costs rise we are continually looking for ways to fill the gaps. Our Fundraising Committee is hard at work planning an event that we hope to share word about very soon. In your conversations with friends and neighbors, please mention Francis Center and the good we do for children. Suggest visiting our website - www.franciscenter.com - and our Facebook page to learn more.

I wish you all a springtime full of all good things. Thank you for the support and prayers you share with the children of Francis Center.

Mary Beth

Mary Beth Smith



**Save
The
Date**

You're Invited!
May 31, 2023 at 4pm

The children will hold a Spring Program to showcase their musical and artistic talent and to celebrate the end to a successful and fun year at Francis Center.

The program will be brief and will begin promptly at 4:00.

We hope to see you there!

Teach wisely.
Act kindly.
Change lives.

Francis Center, Niagara Falls, NY

What makes Francis Center such a unique and special place to be?

Qualified teachers

We hire qualified teachers who know how to design lessons and activities that will result in real progress and development of skills. This sets us apart from other after school programs that may be more recreational. Our aim is to support what the students' classroom teachers are doing so that their foundation of early literacy skills is strong. Our first grade teacher, Ms. Pam is seen here working on building words with students. She has earned a B.S.Ed in Elementary Education and an M.S.Ed in Curriculum Instruction. She is currently a full time first grade teacher and shares her expertise with us after school. Thank you for your energy and skill, Ms. Pam!



Attention to social-emotional well-being

In order to help the *whole child* grow, we teach behavioral skills that will be necessary for future success. These include things like conflict resolution, managing frustration, how to win and lose, and building and maintaining friendships. With help from the Almar Family Foundation grant we were able to purchase an updated library of children's literature that covers these and other topics in a way that is relatable to children and stimulates lots of helpful discussion.

Francis Center is a safe place where the children can practice these skills.



Exposure to Music, Art, and Movement

Offering the children experiences in the Arts has so many benefits. It opens their world to opportunities for creative expression, increases their vocabulary and background knowledge and can help them to discover unknown talents. We've been so lucky this year to have some creative and skilled visitors to help us offer these experiences. Thank you to music teacher Christine Clendening for bringing music to the Center each month, including handbells and bucket ball drumming, glockenspiels and African rhythms! Christina Venditti, owner of Transform Wellness Studio in Lewiston, NY came to teach child-friendly yoga poses and breathing exercises that we can use to "power down" in an anxious situation. Amy DeCastro, owner of the Dance Shop dance studio in Niagara Falls, NY has come to offer us dance classes focusing on African dance and basic hip hop. All of our guests have provided exposure to new experiences for our children. *We are very grateful.*



It is said that, "Every dog must have his day."



- Jonathan Swift.



It turns out we have some canine friends of Francis Center who had GREAT days listening to our children read aloud! The kids spent time learning and mastering stories that they could read aloud to these well-behaved pups. This gave them purpose for reading, practice reading fluently with expression, and a boost in confidence. Boots and Gia were a captive audience that was not interested in correcting or judging, but just listening to a great story. Our days with these furry friends are some of the best we have at Francis Center. Thank you to owners and friends of Francis Center themselves, Gretchen Greene and Kristen Shanks. The children were so happy!



Interested in being a volunteer?



*Long-time volunteer,
Ellen Vilardo*

The success of our program depends on having warm-hearted adults to give one-on-one attention to the children.

You may help them with their homework, listen to them read aloud or play a learning game with them.

They love the individual attention and the benefits are many.

We're looking for people to volunteer one day per week from 2:45-4:30 p.m.

Call us if you're interested!
716-284-2050.



Did you know that Francis Center also supports the Women's Respite Program, run by Sister Diane Gianadda? This program provides women in need with an opportunity for rest and renewal in a safe, comfortable and healing environment.

Contact Sr. Diane at 716-893-0931 if you know someone in need.

Children Learn What They Live

- If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
- If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
- If children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy.
- If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
- If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
- If children live with tolerance, they learn to be patient.
- If children live with praise, they learn to appreciate.
- If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
- If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
- If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
- If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and others.
- If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.





Francis Center

Teach wisely. Act kindly. **Change lives.** 

335 24th Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14303



If you're on Facebook, please "follow" Francis Center. We post regular updates so that you can see the good work being done each week.

Thanks for Loving Us!

Francis Center is a non-profit ministry that depends upon the generous support of so many who believe in the good we're doing. We are grateful to our many faithful volunteers and our many donors. Donations are gratefully accepted through our website at

www.franciscenter.com

or by check, payable to *Francis Center, Inc.*

This year we are also grateful to the following:

Almar Family Foundation
The Grace Foundation
Providence Fund



Wish List

- > Paper products (Dixie cups, napkins, spoons, etc.)
- > Board games (Memory, Sorry, Uno, Trouble, Chutes and Ladders, Checkers, Candy Land)
- > 3 x 5 index cards
- > 2 CD players
- > Tennis balls
- > Clean, gently used loveseats, armchairs, or couches
- > Umbrellas
- > Small gifts or prizes to give for birthdays



!Get ready!

**Our autumn fundraiser
will be a meat raffle to be held
September 15.
More details to come!**