

# FRANCIS CENTER

Spring 2024

## Director's Message:

The flowers have blossomed once again, and so have the children! Each, in their own time. They hit academic and social “growth spurts” in their own seasons as long as they are well cared for. It such a blessing to witness these “springs” in each of them.

This year was one of change and growth at Francis Center. In August of last year, we invited a group of children who would begin school in September to our first Kindergarten Booster Camp. For three weeks of full days we did all we could to best prepare these youngsters for a strong start to school. It was a wonderful success and an enjoyable way to spend the final days of summer.

Camp was the perfect way to kick off our new year of serving these youngest students. We began serving Kindergarteners in the After School Program! This was in response to both requests from the school district and our belief that if we can reach students while they are young and help them to build a rock-solid foundation of literacy and math skills, we can help them to avoid falling behind at an early age. Our aim is not only to support this early learning but to teach the children positive behaviors, work habits and social skills that will help them to receive the learning and to be a successful student.

This shift in the grade levels we serve means that we no longer have second graders in the building. However, with your help we hope we can bring them back for the new school year this coming September. There are a few ways you can be of help to us as we reach for this goal. Of course, funding is necessary and so your continued giving at whatever level you are able makes an enormous difference. You can also help us to raise awareness of Francis Center in the community by sharing stories about our good work with others. Lastly, if you use social media we'd love you to follow the Francis Center Facebook page and to “like” the posts we share here. Each time you do this we have the chance to extend our reach.

If you are receiving this newsletter it means we consider you to be a valued friend of Francis Center. Thank you, sincerely, for the ways that you have supported us in doing what is best for the children we serve. Your donations and your prayers are what help us to thrive.



With hope and gratitude,

*Mary Beth*  
Mary Beth Smith

Teach wisely. Act kindly. Change Lives.

## WHO ARE WE?

Francis Center is a non-profit ministry that depends on the generous support of so many who believe in the good we're doing. We are grateful to our many faithful volunteers and donors. Donations are gratefully accepted through our website at [www.franciscenter.com](http://www.franciscenter.com) or by check, payable to Francis Center, Inc. and mailed to 335 24th St. Niagara Falls, NY 14303.



**May 31st at 4pm**

*Our Annual Spring Program and Art Show will showcase the childrens' talents and will be a festive sendoff after another successful year of programming.*

***Hope to see you there!***



## Kindergarden Booster Camp



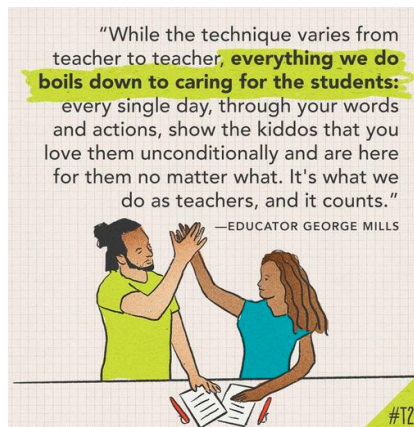
With thanks to the Ladies Ancient Order of Hiberians group we were able to send our campers off to school with new backpacks full of all the supplies their teachers asked for.



*We teach responsibility and independence in addition to academic skills.*

# LEGO STEM Room

With thanks to the Almar Family Foundation grant we are pleased to announce the completion of our **LEGO STEM room!** The Lego Education division offers lessons for each age level that require planning and design, creativity, cooperation and perseverance. Lego bricks are a classic building toy that never ages. Whether a child is building something from a set of instructions or using the bricks to create something from their imagination the benefits are endless. The children are motivated, interested and excited by the challenges waiting for them here.



## Children's Program Receives NAF Grant

Francis Center Children's Program was awarded a grant of \$10,000 by the Niagara Area Foundation, a division of the **Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.**

The full time After School Program serves the youngest of students who are learning early reading and math skills. "In third grade, the focus shifts from learning to read to reading to learn, so it is crucial that children have necessary reading skills by that time," Director Mary Beth Smith said. "I believe it's also crucial that they have learned to *love* to read, so we spend lots of time at Francis Center sharing and enjoying what we read."

The teachers at Francis Center understand that continued learning after school needs to be presented in special ways so that the children's attention and interest are kept. Teachers use hands-on activities, learning games and creative expression. They also rely on adult volunteers to help provide individual attention to the kids. The children are given a variety of experiences to help expand their breadth of knowledge and their vocabularies. "We are able to offer our programs at no cost to the families thanks to generous donations from people in the community and through help from organizations like Niagara Area Foundation," Smith said.

The Niagara Area Foundation was established in 2000 and is a division of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. The Niagara Area Foundation is committed to strengthening the Niagara Region by addressing critical needs to improve lives.

For more than a century, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo has enhanced and encouraged long-term philanthropy in the Western New York community. A 501 (c)(3) organization, the Community Foundation's mission is: Connecting people, ideas and resources to improve lives in Western New York.

Established in 1919, the Community Foundation has made the most of the generosity of individuals, families, foundations and organizations who entrust charitable assets to the Community Foundation's care. Learn more at <https://www.cfgb.org/>.

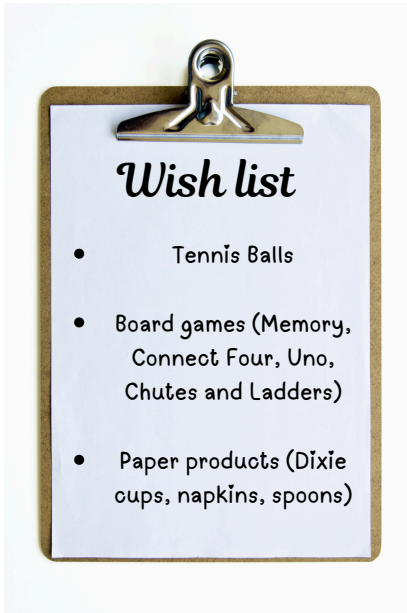


**Community Foundation**  
for Greater Buffalo

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR GENEROSITY



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.



Consider creating a legacy of helping a child succeed in school by including the Children's Program in your Will, or as a beneficiary of life insurance or retirement accounts. Our legal title is Francis Center, Inc., Children's Program.

