It is no surprise to our many friends that Holy Childhood has been gratefully carrying out a legacy established more than 70 years ago—preparing children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities for maximum independence and integration in the community. Now, we are pleased to announce a major initiative which will carry that legacy into the future.

Today, Holy Childhood supports more than 200 students and adults in person-centered services which each have the same goal: to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities thrive in our community, become as independent as possible and to realize their dreams and goals in life.

And so, the vision has emerged to expand an important part of our legacy—the Special Touch Bakery, ensuring that more pie-lovers than ever will long enjoy the legacy pies they crave! The bakery has humble origins. In the early 1980’s, pies and other goodies were baked in a small kitchen within the agency as an activity for school students. Over time, that skills training activity evolved, thanks to the vision of long-time bakery manager Shirley Lynch, to become the Special Touch Bakery; which currently trains and employs 20 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who skillfully produce more than 17,000 pies each year for local businesses, community groups and retail customers throughout the greater Rochester area. In addition...
to making these beloved delicious (and very famous) pies, Special Touch Bakery provides an opportunity for people to learn food production and food service skills while earning a paycheck. The bakery provides development of lifelong skills.

Community Support Is Key

Many Rochester area business leaders and foundations have recognized the value of this project which is estimated to cost approximately $2.6M. So far, $1M has been secured for the Special Touch Bakery expansion project. As part of Round VI of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s Regional Council initiative, the Special Touch Bakery was awarded $481,000. The Fingerlakes Regional Economic Development Council had identified the Special Touch Bakery expansion as a Priority Project. The FLREDC’s five year strategic plan, “Finger Lakes Forward-United for Success,” lays out the region’s efforts to ensure sustainable and long-term growth in the nine county region and to leverage the region’s advantages in key industry sectors, including photonics, optics and imaging; advanced and next generation manufacturing and agriculture and food production. The co-chairs of the FLREDC, in announcing the region’s awarded total of $80.5 for 97 projects identified the value of projects like Special Touch Bakery.

“From the beginning of the REDC process, the Finger Lakes region has benefitted from the dedication of the Council, the participation by hundreds of subject matter and industry experts in our Work Groups, and the valued input of thousands of community stakeholders,” said Danny Wegman, Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair and Wegmans Food Markets CEO.

“This funding represents another significant round of investment in the Finger Lakes Forward plan, which has centered on regional advantages in key industry sectors, including photonics, optics and imaging; advanced and next generation manufacturing; and agriculture and food production,” said Anne Kress, Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair and Monroe Community College President.

The Golisano Foundation has granted the project $250,000. The Golisano Foundation is one of the largest private foundations in the United States devoted exclusively to supporting programs for people with intellectual disabilities. It is a priority to fund programs that will help individuals with developmental disabilities achieve their maximum potential by integrating independence, self-determination, and productivity into all facets of their lives.

“Through our targeted initiatives, it is our vision that communities will encourage and commit to inclusion, acceptance and opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and provide services that empower individuals to make their way productively and creatively in their communities,” said Ann Costello, Golisano Foundation Executive Director. “Holy Childhood and Special Touch Bakery share this vision; we are thrilled to provide resources to this transformational project.”

Other major funding sources include: $75,000 from the Davenport-Hatch Foundation, $40,000 from Donald Robbins, $25,000 from the GRE Foundation/Farash Foundation, $30,000 from an Anonymous donor through the Rochester Area Community Foundation, $25,000 from the Karpus Family Foundation, and $60,000 thanks to friends who attended the Holy Childhood 70th Anniversary Gala.

We are grateful for financial support which continues thanks to the generosity of our friends in the greater Rochester community including foundations, private individual donors and numerous Holy Childhood fundraising projects.

The Holy Childhood Board of Directors is also proud to dedicate critical resources to this important evolution.

“For the better part of two years, the Holy Childhood Board of Directors has been working on numerous ventures that would not only support this organization financially, but more important, continue the mission of supporting children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, said Dr. James Prinzi, Holy Childhood Board of Directors Chairman. “The expanded bakery is a result of this effort, and the board is so excited to see it come to reality in a truly transformational way.”

It’s a Collaborative Effort

Holy Childhood has engaged multiple community and business partners in this exciting expansion project. The goals are many, and include increased pie production and efficiency, increased sales and distribution all while creating new jobs and training right here in Rochester. The new Special Touch Bakery will be an integrated community-based business which will employ people with developmental and intellectual disabilities and their non-disabled peers. For the
bakers already at work at Holy Childhood, including Anthony, it’s exciting to talk about choices for the future.

**Anthony, Bakery Worker**

“It’s very good, he said. The new bakery is big with lots of room—my dream is to work in the bakery, making pies and making new friends.” Anthony says his favorite part of his current job in the bakery is working with the fruit.

“I like working with the apples… and the apple crumb pie is my favorite,” he readily volunteered. Anthony’s mother, Eileen echoes her son’s thoughts and adds, “Anthony has always wanted to work since he was eight years old. Beginning his job at Special Touch Bakery three years ago was the perfect opportunity for him. While Anthony can get nervous in new situations, with the support of his real family and his Holy Childhood family, I am confident he will adjust and grow further in his independence.” Eileen added, “We are excited for the new growth opportunities for him. Each step in his life has been a challenge that he has taken on with determination and he has mastered them all. Anthony feels that Special Touch Bakery is part of his extended family and he loves everyone there.

Since coming to Holy Childhood, with the support of bakery manager Shirley Lynch, he has learned different ways to handle situations that might otherwise make him nervous. At home, we consider Anthony a spokesperson for Special Touch Bakery, because wherever we go he is always telling people about the delicious pies he creates, whether we’re at the dentist office, the doctor’s office, with friends or neighbors and at church as well.”

To assist with the distribution and expansion into the marketplace, Palmer Food Services, led by CEO Kip Palmer has enthusiastically stepped forward and has fully embraced this expansion project as a key distribution partner. Kip, a long-time supporter of Holy Childhood’s mission who has long-admired the vision of Sister Seraphine Herbst and the Holy Childhood founders, is committed to making the Special Touch Bakery pie a “household name”. This significant partnership will help to ensure sustainability at a higher level of production than our current bakery, while remaining true to the legacy quality and recipes of our delicious pies as a top priority. Mr. Palmer will help Special Touch Bakery increase its customer base by distribution regionally and through his Syracuse-based company, G & C Food Distributors, Inc. “This will give Special Touch Bakery the opportunity to get in front of 900 companies in 27 states across the U.S.”, Palmer was quoted in the Rochester Business Journal. “My dream would be for their product to be in such demand that they couldn’t keep up with production.” Kip Palmer believes the pies are a premium product (still made from scratch)—and that’s not going to change. He gladly shares that the apple crumb pie is his favorite. “There’s not a lot of competition in the category of high-end pies.”

“To have a partner like Kip Palmer is really a dream come true,” said Holy Childhood President and CEO Donna Dedee. “We are incredibly grateful that he is helping us to build a sustainable business model which will support our overall mission—and that is a recipe for long-term success.”

An integral part of Special Touch Bakery’s expansion is a partnership with an executive leadership team from Wegmans. “They’ve been instrumental in helping us with pricing and process,” Dedee said. “They have been a valuable source of expertise to help us as we build a sustainable business model.” A cross-functional team from Wegmans spent more than a year assisting with this project.

On behalf of the Wegmans leadership team, Director of Logistics Scott Andrews said, “Our partnership gives the Holy Childhood team a greater understanding of all the elements necessary to scale up a food manufacturing operation with annual production targets many times greater than their current capacity. He added, “It’s exciting to envision the possibilities for the Special Touch Bakery, as Holy Childhood has approached this project as a workforce development opportunity for all workers.”

Critical to the expansion of the Special Touch Bakery is its current workforce. The changing environment regarding “sheltered workshops” and the way Holy Childhood delivers programs and services, coupled with mandates handed down by OPWDD (Office for People with Developmental Disabilities), will bring many changes by the year 2020. Unique transition plans for every person currently employed in our site-based workshops, including Special Touch Bakery, is currently underway. These person-centered processes help those employed in our workshops identify what their goals are relative to employment, as well as the services and supports they will need to be successful.

**Tracy, Bakery Worker**

“Supporting individuals with choosing the right work or training placement for them is the essential focus of the person-centered process,” said Amy P popeck, Holy Childhood’s Director of Programs and Services. “It is extremely important that once site-based workshops are no longer an option, individuals have opportunities to choose the path that will lead them to personal success and fulfillment.”

**There’s Work to be Done**

With the lease signed at 1999 Mt. Read Blvd., internal demolition and construction are scheduled to begin very soon. The design is being handled by SWBR Architects, and Construction Management is being spear-headed by Christa Development Corporation. And now, the task of building the expanded bakery team is underway. The first positions to be posted are Facilities Manager and Bakery Manager; additional positions will be posted in the coming months. Regularly visit [www.holychildhood.org/employment](http://www.holychildhood.org/employment) to follow progress and job descriptions.
“This is where the rubber starts to meet the road on our Bakery project,” said Joseph Perdicho, Director of Strategic Business Development who is serving as the project manager for Holy Childhood.

“Equipment orders are being placed and final design drawings are nearly complete. Once construction begins, we expect to be approximately 4 months from completion; I’m excited to say that we hope to start testing our pie operation sometime in July.”

Critical to the plan to begin pie production in the new facility is to fully train the production team to ensure that safety and quality standards are top-notch. The goal is for the newly expanded Special Touch Bakery to be fully stocked and operational in time for the 2017 Thanksgiving holiday season.

That being said, the Holy Childhood bakers will continue to be hard at work in the current bakery site on our campus to continue to fulfill the orders from our existing loyal customers who will never be forgotten and who we hope will continue their long-time enjoyment of our pies! We know we have demand to meet and will continue to do so! In fact, the current team is also part of strategic discussions on how we will continue to utilize the existing Special Touch Bakery space, perhaps in new ways that will help ensure legacy, integrity to our recipes, innovation on product, and creation of a whole new generation of Special Touch Bakery sweets lovers. Stay tuned!