



The PCI Portal

A Monthly Newsletter from Porto Charities, Inc.

At Porto Charities, Inc. our mission is to support children with special needs by providing the opportunity for an inclusive Catholic education, and young adults with special needs, assistance with meaningful employment in the Diocese of Arlington.

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From the Director's Desk...



Dear Friends,

I'm not sure about all of you, but those of us connected with Porto Charities were very excited and gratified when we saw the new **Diocese of Arlington's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan** presented by Bishop Michael Burbidge last month. If you haven't read it, I would encourage you to do so. Just click on the picture or link above.

In particular, in reviewing the six focus areas, or pillars, and thirty goals as outlined by the Bishop, clergy, religious, and laity in the Diocese, we were very happy to see that in **Pillar #3, "Invigorate Catholic Education for All"**, that they specifically included the goal to **"Make Catholic Schools, faith formation and youth ministry programs more accessible to students with special learning needs."**

Once again, we have been blessed that Bishop Burbidge has reconfirmed his continued support for the concept of an **inclusive Catholic education and employment for ALL of God's children** in the Diocese.

This coincides with the Bishop's commitment to PCI's annual **Porto Charities' Special Kids/Special Needs Annual Collection** on behalf of our intellectually and developmentally challenged children and young adults. As mentioned in last issue, funds from these collections will help support special education and inclusion programs in our **four diocesan high schools and many of our parish schools** in the coming year.

We encourage you to **speak with your Pastor** and find out if your parish is participating in the campaign, and if not, ask them if they will. 100% of the donated funds will be used to **support inclusive education** in our Diocesan schools.

There is still time in this calendar year to contribute to our **Special Kids/Special Needs Campaign**; just go to the top of this newsletter and tap the **"Donate Now"** button! Your gift, no matter how big or small, impacts the lives of ALL of our children and families in the Diocese.

Thank you for your consideration...

All the Best,
Larry Rzepka
Executive Director

Inclusion Catalysts

Recognizing our Friends who have made a Significant Difference toward an Inclusive Community



**Bishop Ireton HS,
Alexandria, VA**
2021 PCI Grant Recipient

Mindful of the belief that all human beings are made in the image of Christ, Bishop Ireton HS seeks to foster spirituality and inclusion among all members of their student body. Students learn together, worship together, serve together, and celebrate one another.

Bishop Ireton's Special Services Team collaborates with parents, content teachers, school counselors, and the school nurse, to provide students with the necessary differentiated supports to achieve success in all components of their school career.

The Bishop Ireton Special Services Team approaches programming as Christ-centered and student-centered work, with the belief that all children have the right to access a high-quality Catholic education and reach their full potential. They offer several year-long special service programs to support students academically.



Leo Alonso
PCI Board of Directors

Leo Alonso has been an innovative advocate for inclusive learning, living and employment for people with disabilities for decades. He was one of the founders of the Paul VI Options program, the George Mason Life program, and Porto Charities, Inc. where he is currently serving as the **President of the PCI Board of Directors**.

He has a daughter, Vivian with Down Syndrome, who graduated from Paul VI Options and the George Mason Life Program who is currently working on Capitol Hill.

He has brought his experience in the grocery and mortgage business to bear on Porto Charities employment and housing initiatives. Leo has always been active in community service, serving as a Special Olympics coach and a member of Porto 104.

Bishop Burbidge Celebrates Annual Disabilities Mass at Holy Spirit Church

On Sunday, September 26, Bishop Michael Burbidge held the **Bishop's Annual Mass Celebrating Disability Awareness at Holy Spirit Catholic Church**. This yearly event celebrates inclusion and awareness for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"It was very touching to watch children with special needs doing the readings and bringing the offertory gifts at Mass" said Tim Williamson, whose son, Patrick, has an intellectual disability and is currently enrolled at St. Anthony of Padua. "My son proudly wore his school uniform to the Bishop's Mass, and his teachers were there to show their support. He feels the love and inclusion and it makes him very happy."

Porto Charities' board of directors and staff were present as well. **Porto's President Leo Alonso**, spoke about the importance of Porto's work within the community, particularly in the areas of inclusive education and employment. After the Mass, the congregation gathered outdoors for a celebratory meal and to thank the Bishop for his efforts in making our Diocese more inclusive for people with disabilities.



Parents' Advisory Council News

Next Meeting of the PCI Parents' Advisory Council is scheduled for Monday, October 18, 2021 at 7:30 pm on Zoom.



The PCI Parents' Advisory Council (PAC) is made up of parents/legal guardians of children with special needs and representatives of the Office of Catholic Schools. The PAC assists Porto Charities in its mission of expanding inclusive Catholic education and employment options throughout the Diocese of Arlington.

The council members also serve as ambassadors in their parish, promoting dialogue and sustained involvement supporting Porto's goal of providing ALL of God's children the opportunity to reach their full potential through inclusive education, meaningful work, and independence in living commensurate with their capabilities.

If you would like to participate, send an email to Larry Rzepka, PCI Executive Director, at lrzepka@portocharities.org and we'll forward a link to the meeting.

Did You Know?

The Countdown to the World's Biggest Day of Generosity is On!

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

GivingTuesday, often stylized as **#GivingTuesday** for the purposes of hashtag activism, is the **Tuesday after Thanksgiving** in the United States. It is touted as a "global generosity movement unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world".

GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Since then, it has grown into a year-round global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity.

Join the movement and give – each Tuesday and every day – whether it's some of your time, a donation, or the power of your voice in your local community.

It's a simple idea: whether it's making someone smile, helping a neighbor or stranger out, showing up for an issue or people we care about, or giving some of what we have to those who need our help, every act of generosity counts and everyone has something to give.



Watch for this space in the next issue of **The PCI Portal** for ways on how you can make Giving Tuesday a catalyst for inclusive Catholic education by supporting Porto Charities!

Thank You for Supporting Porto Charities, Inc.!

Porto Charities Inc is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable and educational organization (Tax ID #30-0544129).
Contributions to Porto Charities are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.