



The PCI Portal

A Monthly Newsletter from Porto Charities, Inc.

At Porto Charities, Inc. our mission is to support children with special needs with 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 hope this issue of *The PCI Portal* finds you in good health and good spirits! Once again, we start a new year with the shadow of a COVID variant looming overhead playing havoc with work & school schedules, social interactions and our peace-of-mind over the safety of our friends and loved ones. Take heart...we are in this together and, together, we will make it through. In this month's issue...:

- **Inclusion to Belonging Conference:** The in-person conference scheduled for February 5, 2022 will be **POSTPONED** due to COVID concerns. A future date will be announced soon. Instead, on **February 5, 2022**, please join us for a live **VIRTUAL** webinar featuring our keynote speaker, **Beth Foraker, Executive Director of the National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion**. Details in the article below.
- **Parents Advisory Council:** After taking a short hiatus to spend with family & friends during the holiday season, the PCI PAC will be back in action! The next meeting of the Parents' Advisory Council is set for **Monday, January 31, 2022 at 7:30 pm on Zoom**. If you wish to participate, please send an email to: lrzepka@portocharities.org and we'll provide you the Zoom link.
- **Mystery in Marrakesh:** Again, due to COVID concerns, the February 27th in-person event is being **postponed**. Please mark your calendars for **April 7, 2022** (and keep your fingers crossed!)
- **2022 Grant Awards:** The PCI Grants Review Committee has met and **final award** announcements for 2022 should be coming out over the next few weeks. The application pool was deep this year with many **outstanding projects proposed**.

That's the update for now - we wish you all a healthy, safe and blessed 2022!

Larry Rzepka
Executive Director

Inclusion Catalysts

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



St. Paul VI Catholic High School, Chantilly, VA

The mission of St. Paul VI Catholic High School is to provide an excellent Catholic education to young men and women by affording them the means to achieve spiritual, intellectual, personal, social, and physical development according to the teachings of the Gospel and St. Francis de Sales. St. Paul VI Catholic High School is committed to graduating responsible, moral, service-oriented young adults who will continue to "grow in grace and wisdom."

In August 1998, six students entered the first PVI Options class. The Options program provides a Catholic education to students with intellectual disabilities. In 1998, Paul VI was only the second Catholic high school in the U.S. to offer such a program. PVI Options has since expanded to 16 students and has been used as a model for many other high school programs.

PVI Options...

Provides students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities access to an individualized inclusive, student-centered Catholic education

- Promotes the inherent dignity of ALL human persons
- Supports the greater school community in carrying out the school mission by providing all students the means to achieve spiritual, intellectual, personal, social and physical development according to the teachings of the Gospel and St. Francis de Sales.

Through highly individualized plans, Options encourages each student to become fully included in the school community.

Christine Fowler PCI Board of Directors

Christine Fowler has served on the Porto Charities, Inc Board of Directors since 2018. Prior to the birth of her second Child she was Clinical Nurse Specialist in Critical Care Nursing. She earned a MS in Nursing from The Medical University of South Carolina. She has worked as a Critical Care RN or Clinical Nurse Specialist in Florida, California, South Carolina and Maryland, moving rather frequently with her husband Mark who was a Pediatrician in the US Navy.

She became an active advocate for individuals with disabilities shortly after Zach was born in 1998. She started a support group for parents of children with Down Syndrome in Savannah Georgia in 1999. Ben, the youngest of Christine's and Mark's children was diagnosed with autism in 2003. Early intervention for both boys became a large part of family life as well as setting down roots in their Vienna Community where Kate, her oldest, started first grade.

She actively promoted the belief system and practice of inclusion at Wolfrap Elementary School as the Inclusion Committee Representative to the PTA. She served on the Parent Education Committee of The Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia for 5 years. Zach attended Paul VI where the whole family benefitted from the inclusive catholic community, and Zach flourished. She is currently a Special Olympics Coach and serves on The Northern Virginia, Special Olympics Virginia Counsel of Area 26.

The experience at Paul VI provided the motivation to become involved with Porto Charities to help insure the continued expansion of Inclusive Catholic education and employment. Zach is currently employed by St. Leo the Great Catholic School and loving his inclusive experience as a staff member.

Inclusion Conference Goes Virtual!



From Inclusion to Belonging

EMBRACING DISABILITY AS
PART OF THE CHURCH



Saturday, February 5, 2022
9:00 – 11:00 AM

The in-person *From Inclusion to Belonging* mini conference has been **postponed** due to COVID concerns. However, we invite you to join us for a live **VIRTUAL** webinar.

We are thrilled that **Bishop Michael F. Burbidge** will open the event with a prayer and personal remarks. This will be followed by a keynote address by **Beth Foraker, Executive Director of the National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion**. There will be an opportunity for live Q & A following Beth's presentation, "*Inclusion: The Path to True Belonging*."

If you are a **pastor, priest, catechist, parishioner, educator or parent** ~ this webinar is for you! Beth inspires her listeners to take small steps toward greater inclusion for individuals with disabilities in the daily life of the Church.

Sign up for this **FREE** webinar using the link below. Once you register, you will get your personal link to the webinar sent to your email box. The link can't be used by more than one person, so please encourage your friends and co-workers to register too.

[Register For This Event](#)

NCPD Welcomes the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge as Episcopal Moderator

For Immediate Release

(courtesy of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability)

The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) is pleased to announce that the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop, Diocese of Arlington, accepted the invitation to serve as incoming Episcopal Moderator for NCPD, effective January 1, 2022. Bishop Burbidge succeeds the Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D., Archdiocese of Louisville, KY, in this vital role.

Bishop Burbidge's ministry is devoted to helping his flock recognize the infinite, God-given worth of every human being, paying special attention to those who are so frequently on the margins such as people with disabilities. He consistently raises awareness of mental health concerns such as suicide, addiction, and depression. (more in the link below)



[Click Here to Read Full Press Release](#)

Thank You for Supporting Porto Charities, Inc.!

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