



## 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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Follow us on social media to stay up to date on our events!



## From the Director's Desk...



Dear Friends of Porto Charities,

It's that time of year again when thoughts drift off to the upcoming holidays and the weather starts cooling off. But, here at Porto Charities, things are just starting to heat up. Here's the update:

- A great time was had by all at our **13th Annual Charity Golf Tournament** held on Friday, October 8th at the Regency at Dominion Valley Golf Club in Haymarket, VA. More than 70 golfers showed up to enjoy the day's friendly competition and fairly nice weather. More than \$20,000 was raised to support our efforts. Thanks to ALL of you who participated, donated or sponsored the day's activities. A standout performance that day was provided by our special guest speaker, Ms. Elizabeth Eisenberg, who addressed our crowd during lunch and whose remarks earned the first standing ovation in the Tournament's history!
- **Porto's' Parents' Advisory Council** continues to meet and work on their first-year plans. Several priorities on their list include: developing the Porto Ambassadors Program (outreach to ALL parishes in the Diocese); a new podcast/webinar series and representing Porto Charities at an upcoming Office of Faith Formation conference for Religious Ed teachers. Details on all their efforts will be forthcoming.
- The **2022-2023 Call for Funding Proposals** went out to schools in the Diocese several weeks ago. Grant requests must be received by my office by **November 30th** at which time the Porto Board of Directors' Grant Review Committee begins their work.
- We are pleased to announce that Porto Charities is working with the Office of Catholic Education and the Office of Faith Formation to develop the Catholic Diocese of Arlington's first-ever **diocesan-wide inclusive education conference** to support the needs of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, educators, and clergy. Entitled "**From Inclusion to Belonging – Embracing Disability in the Body of Christ**", the event is designed to inform, inspire, and equip Catholics in schools and parishes to create a culture of belonging for individuals with, or impacted by, disability. It is scheduled for **Saturday, February 5, 2022, from 8:30 am – 1:30 pm at Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington**. More details to be announced shortly.
- We are excited to announce that Porto's third annual **Mystery in Marrakesh** event is back and scheduled to be held at the **Springfield Golf and Country Club on Sunday, February 27, 2022 at 5:30 pm**. Imagine yourself on a tour in Marrakesh where the combination to your luggage containing the tickets for the night's entertainment has been lost! You and your team of fellow tourists are given instructions to the various market stalls to perform challenges, tasks, solve puzzles and look for clues to recover the luggage combination. Think of it as an evening where the Amazing Race meets the Escape Room! You don't want to miss this!! Look for details in an

upcoming email.

- Last, but certainly not least, a quick reminder that **Porto Charities' Inclusion-Share-A-Thon** is currently underway through the month of November. Find out how you can participate in the article below. So...what's your story?

All the Best,  
**Larry Rzepka**  
*Executive Director*

## Inclusion Catalysts

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



**St. Theresa Catholic School,  
Ashburn, VA**  
*2021 PCI Grant Recipient*

St. Theresa Catholic School offers a caring, safe, disciplined, and respectful environment for children. We promote academic excellence and foster a love for learning across all curricular areas. Our students develop the skills to acquire knowledge with an integrated curriculum that takes into account different learning styles and abilities. We believe that each child is a unique person with a God-given purpose in life.

In an effort to foster continued growth, the school embraces the challenge to provide assistance to serve students with special needs according to the resources available within the school. STCS employs Resource Teachers who provide academic support to students who demonstrate a need for additional help. They will also provide guidance for parents during the child study process.



**Sheila Erhardt**  
*PCI Board of Directors*

Sheila Erhardt has been a long time advocate for the community with Intellectual Disabilities. Prior to early retirement, Sheila was the Controller for Octagon Sports Marketing and Athlete Representation for the majority of her career.

She has served on the Board of Porto Charities since 2015. In addition to Porto, she currently serves with several volunteer organizations, including Special Olympics, Davis Family Partnership, and Vienna Presbyterian Church. She currently resides in Vienna with her husband Jeff and two daughters, Emma and Grace.

Emma has Down syndrome and graduated from Paul VI Options and St Mark Evangelist Program.

Inclusive Education is her passion!!

## Inclusion Share-A-Thon!

Porto Charities believes that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are part of God's created work, and should be able to reach their full potential by having the opportunity to receive an enriching, inclusive education and the opportunity to seek meaningful employment. That's what Porto Charities is all about – supporting children with special needs with the opportunity for an inclusive Catholic education, and adults with special needs, assistance with meaningful work.



During the month of November, we are asking all of you to share your story about inclusive education or employment by participating in **Porto Charities' Inclusion Share-A-Thon!**

For the next 30 days, we are asking you to submit a picture...written statement...story...or short video clip of what inclusion means to you, your friends, your family or your work environment. Whether you are a parent...a teacher...an employer...a brother or sister...a friend...a mentor...a member of the clergy or

religious order...or just someone in the Diocese who has been witness to the positive impact inclusion has had on our community, we are asking you to tell us in your own words.

This is how it will work:

Send us a picture, written statement (a few lines) or a video clip of what you feel the impact inclusion has had in the Diocese OR what you feel the impact should be. You can also send us a story about how your child has experienced inclusion in the Diocese either through school or work. Of course, if you have some

kind words to say about Porto Charities and how we are working toward an inclusive Catholic education or employment environment, it would be appreciated. You can upload these pictures and videos directly to <https://www.tribute.co/porto-charities-inc-share-a-thon/>

Tell others about Porto on your social media accounts and encourage them to participate in our Porto Charities' Inclusion Share-A-Thon. You can create your own post, or share one of ours. We will be posting throughout the month of November.

**So...what's your story?**

## Parents' Advisory Council News

**Next Meeting of the PCI Parents' Advisory Council is scheduled for Monday, November 15, 2021 at 7:30 pm on Zoom.**



### Meet our Co-Chairs!

**Sharon Storey** lives in Bristow, Virginia, with her husband Steven and two kids, Max and Lulu. After many years of creating solutions as an IT consultant, she has turned her energy and creativity towards the special needs community as well as volunteering and supporting local Catholic schools. Sharon's passion for inclusive education was sparked when her daughter, Lulu, was diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth. That led to Sharon and her husband launching a Podcast - A Special Storey - that focused on their experiences raising children with Special Needs. Most recently, Sharon worked with the local diocesan school, All Saints, to admit Lulu as their first ever child with Down syndrome for the 2021 school year. Sharon continues to serve on the PTO at All Saints and is excited to see inclusive education grow within the diocese!

**Steven Storey** is a Customer Success Executive and has worked for some of the largest and most successful financial and technology companies in the world. Currently he is a Sr. Customer Success Manager with Microsoft Corporation. He is active in the non-profit world, having held board positions with various non-profit organizations in the DC area, focusing the education and development of at-risk youths, as well as providing housing and other essential needs for expectant mothers, and now supports local food banks and free medical clinics run by Catholic Charities. He is passionate about sharing his Catholic faith and helping those in need in the communities around him and this energy has now focused on children in the Special Needs community, as his daughter Lulu, born with Down syndrome, begins Kindergarten at All Saints.

*"We were so excited to discover the great impact that Porto Charities is creating in the Arlington Diocese schools for young people in the Special Needs community. This helped pave the way for our daughter to begin Kindergarten at All Saints this fall. We were so energized that we asked if we could help and be part of the mission and can't wait to work with the Parents Advisory Council to help expand inclusive education opportunities for more families in the Arlington Diocese and support this very critical initiative led by our Bishop Burbidge."*

*Steve & Sharon Storey*

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

## Did You Know?

**Tuesday, November 30, 2021**

## A Few GivingTuesday Quick Facts

GivingTuesday is a growing global generosity movement that drives giving and collective action in communities around the world.

- GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Over the past nine years, this idea has grown into a global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity year-round.
- GivingTuesday inspires generosity worldwide through a distributed network of leaders. There are official GivingTuesday national movements in 80 countries, led by a global network of passionate, entrepreneurial leaders. At a grassroots level, people and organizations participate in GivingTuesday in every single country in the world.
- GivingTuesday creates global impact driven by local action. In the U.S. alone, 300 community campaigns rally thousands of nonprofits, foundations, grassroots organizations, small businesses, and generous individuals to give back. Through #GivingTuesdaySpark, youth are leading change and inspiring action around the world.
- People can show their generosity in a variety of ways during GivingTuesday. Whether it's helping a neighbor, advocating for an issue, sharing a skill, or finding virtual volunteer opportunities with their favorite causes - **everyone has something to give and every act of generosity counts.**



## Please Remember Porto Charities, Inc. on GivingTuesday!

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.