



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 am very pleased and honored today to announce the **2022 Special Kids/Special Needs Fund** grant recipients from the Diocese of Arlington. The proposals submitted this cycle were truly exemplary and demonstrates the passion for our mission and the effort our schools & education organizations are making in becoming inclusive of all of God's children. Porto Charities was happy to award more than \$100,000 in grants throughout the Diocese.

Congrats to this year's recipients and we look forward to working with all of them in the year to come.

Diocese of Arlington
The Basilica School of St. Mary, Alexandria
Bishop Ireton High School, Alexandria
Bishop Denis J. O'Connell High School, Arlington
Holy Family School, Dale City
Holy Spirit School, Annandale
St. Anthony of Padua School, Falls Church
St. James Preschool, Falls Church
St. John Paul the Great High School, Potomac Shores
St. Leo the Great, Fairfax
St. Mark Evangelist School, Vienna
St. Paul IV High School, Chantilly
St. Theresa School, Ashburn
St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School, Woodbridge
St. Thomas More School, Arlington
St. Veronica School, Chantilly

Larry Rzepka
Executive Director

Inclusion Catalysts

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



The Basilica School of St. Mary
Alexandria, VA

In addition to providing more than 200 students a year with intervention services, extra instruction, and accommodations designed for students with learning disabilities as part of the Basilica School's Learning Resources Center, Basilica School of Saint Mary has also created a program of instruction and faculty support for our special education students.

We employ a full inclusion model that places all students within the general education classroom while also addressing appropriately the individual learning needs of each student — from simply providing more time for a child to take a test or accomplish a task, to modifying curriculum and providing supplemental small group instruction to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities, autism or significant cognitive delays.

St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School
Woodbridge, VA

At Aquinas we believe that all human beings are created in the image of Christ. We embrace the opportunity for students to grow socially, spiritually, and academically alongside their peers in a Catholic environment and strive to promote belongingness. Aquinas recognizes the beauty and potential inherent within each student.

Aquinas currently offers a resource program to assist students with individualized and specific educational support needs. It is the school's goal to expand that program to offer support to students with more significant needs. For the first time, Aquinas has accepted and is serving a student in this current school year with Downs Syndrome. With this year as a pilot, the future goal would be to expand the program and accept additional students with intellectual disabilities.

Inclusion Conference Draws More than 250 Attendees



From Inclusion to Belonging

EMBRACING DISABILITY AS
PART OF THE CHURCH



Our 1st Inclusion conference was a success! Held Saturday, Feb 5, 2022, the conference was sponsored by the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools, Office of Faith Formation, Bishop O'Connell High School and Porto Charities.

Bishop Michael F. Burbidge said in opening remarks that his goal is to expand services for

students with intellectual disabilities to every school in the diocese. Currently, 12 elementary and all four diocesan high schools have students with intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome. Bishop Burbidge also spoke about the Diocese's work with Porto Charities to help students with intellectual disabilities find jobs after they graduate, and he hopes to create such jobs at the chancery building. "Our chancery should lead by example," he said.

The featured speaker was Beth Foraker, Founder of the National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion. "Belonging is delight, joy and laughter. That is the level up from just inclusion," said Foraker, who encouraged diocesan parents, educators and advocates during the inspiring conference.

After Foraker's presentation, a panel responded to questions from attendees. On the panel were Diane Elliott, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services; Susan Rinaldi, Director of Expanded Services at Bishop O'Connell; Nancy Emanuel, Diocesan Coordinator for Special Needs Ministries in the Office of Faith Formation; Larry Rzepka, Executive Director of Porto Charities; and Carmen Chiappetta, Outreach Coordinator for Porto Charities and school teacher. Elliott said 269 parents and others from across the diocese registered for the conference. "We're not just talking the talk, we want to walk the walk together with you," she said, adding that an in-person gathering is planned Nov. 5.

Below you will find the link to the recording of the event. We encourage you to share this recording with others! Also, check out the [Catholic Herald's article](#) about the conference by [clicking here](#).

[View the Recording Here](#)

Mystery in Marrakesh - April 7, 2022

The Wait is Finally Over!

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 Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 5:30 pm.**

What is Mystery in Marrakesh? Imagine yourself on a bucket-list trip to Morocco, where you find yourself in the imperial city of Marrakesh. While your tour includes dinner and entertainment in the evening, you've lost the combination to your luggage, which contains the tickets to the show tonight! Thus begins a fun and exciting evening where teams compete by solving puzzles, playing games, and following clues, with the goal of collecting your luggage combination. Along the way one team will be crowned the winner of Mystery in Marrakesh 2022!



Captains are assigned to lead their teams of tourists in completing the challenges and finding the luggage combination. The teams are given instructions at the various Moroccan market stalls to perform the challenges, tasks, and puzzles. Challenges are timed and the team of tourists will have one hour to determine the luggage combination and recover the tickets to the evening's entertainment.

New this year: additional minutes and clues may be bought on-site!

This is **Inclusion in Action!** Many of our guests are young adults with intellectual disabilities who fully participate in this event and look forward to it each year. You can help us make this a memorable night for them, while having fun yourself!

In addition to exploring the markets of Marrakesh while uncovering the mystery to your luggage combination, guests will enjoy dinner and wine, as well as catching up with family, old friends, and new acquaintances, all dedicated to helping children with special needs have the opportunity for an inclusive Catholic education, and giving adults with special needs assistance with meaningful employment in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington.

Seating is limited - so purchase your tickets **NOW** before they're gone!
If you are unable to join us, please consider making a donation to support our efforts.

[Click Here to Purchase Your Tickets or Donate](#)

Special Announcement



Our friends at the **Optimist Club of Greater Vienna** are offering a \$2,500 scholarship to assist students with documented Intellectual Disabilities (ID) from the greater Vienna area with certificates of completion to continue their education in post-secondary educational/training programs.

There is one award per year. The scholarship award will be in the form of a check payable to the educational/training institution that the applicant will attend. The student may use an award at any time from the date of award, until and including the fall semester or quarter of the calendar year following the announcement of the award.

**Applications must be received between
April 1 - May 6, 2022.**

For eligibility requirements and more details on how to apply, please contact the Optimist Club of Greater Vienna at:

idd@optimistclubofgreatervienna.org

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.