



ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Building Wisdom and Faith Through Service to God

For Immediate Release

St. Joseph Catholic School receives a grant from Porto Charities

Herndon, VA – November 8, 2019 — St. Joseph Catholic School

St. Joseph Catholic School, Herndon, VA has been given a grant from Porto Charities, Inc. to employ Mr. Kevin Bennett as a library assistant. Mr. Bennett will start on Tuesday, November 5, 2019 and work this school year with Mrs. Moschetto in the library. Mr. Bennett is a young man with Autism, who graduated from the George Mason University LIFE program and who has worked with the Library of Congress for four years. Additionally, Mr. Bennet interned for the U.S. House of Representatives, and he is very excited about joining the staff at SJS and meeting all the students.

Porto Charities, in conjunction with Bishop Burbidge, the Office of Catholic Schools and the George Mason Learning Into Future Environments (LIFE) program, has put in place a pilot program where Catholic schools employ adults with intellectual disabilities along with their job coaches, as necessary. They work as junior class assistants, lunch and recess monitors, P.E. helpers, as receptionists or doing other office work or anywhere a school deems appropriate.

The principals at St. Joseph in Herndon, St. Veronica's and Our Lady of Good Counsel are very excited and have volunteered for this pilot employing very capable young adults to work in these positions. The GMU LIFE program will also be providing student internships at Nativity, St. Leo's and St. Mary's preschool in Fairfax in the same sorts of positions as mentioned above.

As the Diocese moves forward with Bishop Burbidge's desire for full inclusion in all of our schools, this pilot is a natural progression that will benefit the generation of special adults educated in the past 20 years in schools where they have received full acceptance from the entire school community. This has allowed them to perform at much higher levels than in prior years. They are ready and have proven themselves able to succeed in the workforce.

Porto Charities' desire is that as the school community and families of typical students are exposed to our special adults, owners of companies and those in human resources departments will consider hiring them as employees and provide more job opportunities. This



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pilot will blossom and be as successful as the special education initiatives have been in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington since their start with the Paul VI Options program in 1998.

Leo Alonso, President, Porto Charities, Inc sends a huge thanks out to all of the pastors of the Diocese of Arlington and their parishioners who support these efforts by opening up their hearts to the annual Porto Charities Special Kids/Special Needs 2nd collection. For more information about Porto Charities please visit their website at <https://portocharities.org>.

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Photo Attached: PortoCharities

