



Welcome Back To School!

Dear Friends,

This special back-to-school edition is a celebration of new beginnings and the incredible students and staff who enrich our Catholic school communities. We're proud to highlight students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are starting the new school year, embodying the spirit of belonging that is at the heart of our faith. This issue also highlights the remarkable employees with disabilities at schools in the Diocese of Arlington. Through our PortoWorks initiative, we've had the honor of helping these individuals find meaningful work, not only to contribute to the operational success of our schools, but also to serve as inspiring role models for students and colleagues alike.

As we embrace the hope of this new school year, we also hold in our hearts the students, faculty, and families of Assumption Catholic School in Minnesota following the recent tragic events. We stand with them in prayer and sorrow, echoing the words of the USCCB statement, *"Whenever one part of the Body of Christ is wounded, we feel the pain as if it were our very own children."* In times of immense sadness, our shared faith becomes a source of strength and comfort. We are blessed to be part of a community that responds to pain with hope, love, and solidarity.

We want to wish our school community a year filled with learning, growth, and joy for all students and educators. May our Blessed Mother Mary cover all students with her precious mantle, guiding and protecting them throughout this school year.

Sincerely,
Porto Charities

Eva

Eva is thrilled to enter 5th grade at the Basilica School of St. Mary.

She's really excited to enjoy the new Science lab with Mr. Thiemann and also stop into the pre-k classroom to check on her little brother!

Eva looks forward to the new school year and to start CYO tennis next week.



Eva on her first day as a 5th grader at the Basilica School of St. Mary

Lucy

Lucy loves going to St. Paul VI Catholic High School because she believes it makes her smart! Her favorite subjects are Math and Reading.

Did you know that PVI was the first high school in the Diocese of Arlington to establish an Options Program for students with disabilities in 1998? Today, all four diocesan high schools offer Options Programs and Expanded Services for students with disabilities!



Lucy on her 1st day of school at St. Paul VI Catholic HS

Lily

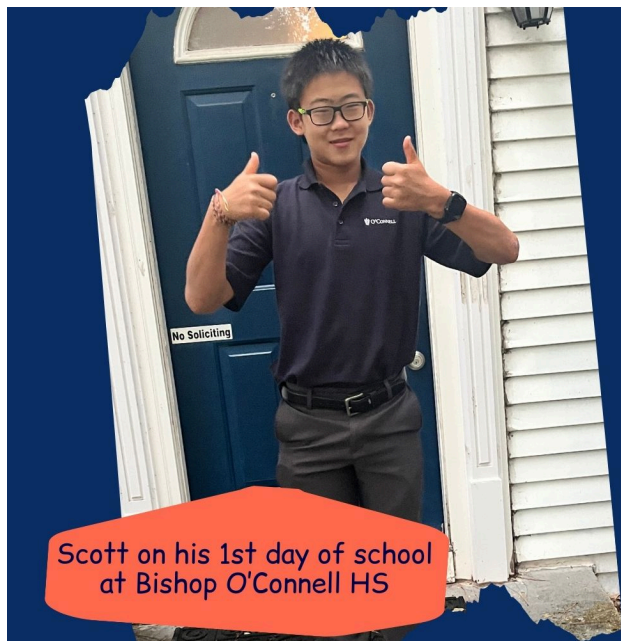
Lily is in her senior year at Bishop O'Connell High School.

Lily's favorite subject is usually Math. She is looking forward to all the special senior events.

We are so excited for Lily and all the seniors. We wish you all a truly memorable year!



Lily on her 1st day as Senior at Bishop O'Connell HS



Scott on his 1st day of school at Bishop O'Connell HS

Scott

Scott is a new student at Bishop O'Connell High School.

On his first day, he made sure to introduce himself to Father Daniel, and on his second day, he asked to sit with Father at lunch!

Scott and his family are truly grateful that he is blessed to attend a Catholic high school.

Celeste

Celeste is an employee at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School.

Celeste says her favorite part of working at OLGC is helping students and doing office work.

Did you know OLGC won the Outstanding Employer Award at the 2023 Porto Charities Gala?



Celeste alternates between classroom and office work at OLGC

Zach

Zach loves working at St. Leo the Great Catholic School.

Ms. Beth Kappes (Zach's co-worker) shares that they are ready for another great year at St. Leo the Great and that she is so blessed to work with Mr. Zach again this year!

Did you know St. Leo the Great has two employees with disabilities?



Zach is excited for another year at St. Leo the Great School

The school is the worthy recipient of the 2024 Porto Charities Outstanding Employer Award.

Mia

Mia is returning this year as an intern at St. Timothy Catholic School.

Mia enjoys supporting the teachers in the afternoon preschool class.

Did you know Mia is a talented artist who made the beautiful Mary with baby Jesus artwork for our 2024 Christmas card?

Mia enjoying back-to-school BBQ at St. Timothy School

Are You Ready to Grow Inclusion at Your School?



Belonging Rocks!

Porto Charities can help your school grow its inclusion and belonging efforts!

Would you like Porto Charities to engage with your school community about the importance of building a culture of belonging for individuals with disabilities? **We can tailor our presentation to your school's needs — from brief sessions at PTO meetings to professional development workshops and everything in between!**

Additionally, be sure to take advantage of these fantastic opportunities:

- **Introduction to Special Education course** from George Mason University. We

have just completed our 2nd successful course, and the next one will be offered in 2026. For questions, contact education@portocharities.org

- **Scholarship for educators** pursuing Master's degrees and certificates in Special Education. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Annual school grants**. We will start receiving applications in December. For more information about our grants, [click here](#).
- **Learn from more than 60 webinars**, which include a variety of topics related to disabilities presented by local and national professionals. Check them out on our [YouTube channel](#).
- **Attend our annual conference on disability**. Save the date for our 4th annual conference, scheduled for March 7th at Saint John Paul the Great Catholic High School in Potomac Shores. Registration will be forthcoming.

Please [contact us today](#) to start building a culture of belonging at your school!



Additionally, we invite you to review our 2024 Annual Report to discover the various ways Porto Charities fosters inclusion and belonging in the Diocese of Arlington.

2024 Annual Report

How Your School Can Support Porto Charities

Porto Charities would be grateful if Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Arlington would consider hosting a **dress-down day**, **organizing a bake sale**, **or holding a car wash or penny war** to celebrate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Together we can build a culture of true belonging!

Please continue to support our mission with your prayers, volunteering, attending our events, spreading the word about us, following and sharing our social media posts, and by making a gift to Porto Charities. Every gift you make will support children and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the Diocese of Arlington.

Make a gift to Porto Charities



EMBRACING BELONGING ALL YEAR LONG



2025

OCT 3
GOLF
TOURNAMENT



OCT 12
RESPECT LIFE &
DISABILITY MASS



DEC 6
CHRISTMAS
PARTY



MAR 7
DISABILITY
CONFERENCE



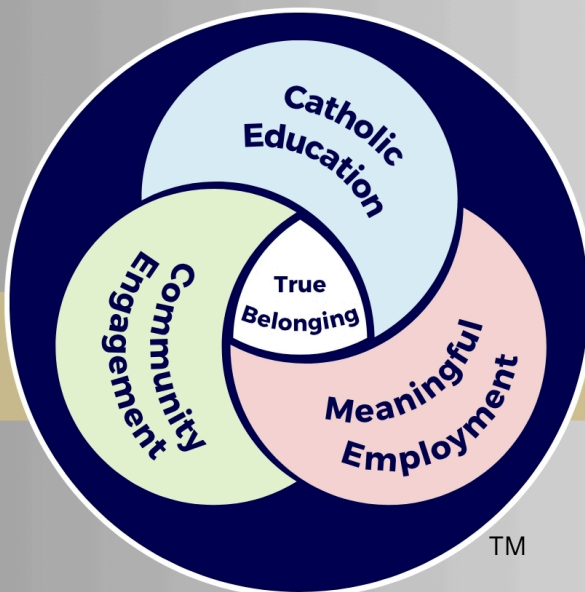
APR 24
AWARDS
GALA

2026

www.portocharities.org

Events

Building a Culture of Belonging



Porto Charities is a 501(c)3 organization that builds a culture of belonging for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by increasing their access to Catholic education, meaningful employment, and community engagement in the Diocese of Arlington.



*True Belonging
means being seen,
known and valued.*



Donate Today

Website