



SHIFTING SANDS



A Spiritual Message

Shout It From the Rooftops

A friend of mine from another part of the country and the mother of a child with Down syndrome told me this story. She was in a mall with her son doing what a mother and child ordinarily do in the mall – shopping. When lunchtime arrived, they went to the food court for sandwiches. They were just about finished when a young woman approached them and introduced herself, mentioning that she was pregnant and that amniocentesis had recently indicated she would probably give birth to a baby with Down syndrome. She had been struggling, she said, trying to decide what to do: to abort or not to abort. “But I have been watching you, both of you, for a while, and the love that you so obviously have – and show – for one another helped me make up my mind. I am going to full term, and I look forward to loving my child (looking at the mother) as much as you love him, and having him love me (looking to the child) as much as you love her.”

I am reminded of this story as we approach the Feast of Pentecost, the day on which Christians worldwide celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, changing them from confused and cowering men and women into bold and brave proclaimers of the Good News. They became witnesses of God’s love and power, some of them traveling to the ends of the then-known earth to tell everyone they

met all about it. They were given the power of the Spirit of God.

As Alhambrans and Porto Charity people, we have a special gift given to us. Our association with the individuals with developmental disabilities is a gift that gives us insights into the value of life – all human life – that many others do not have. And we are called to share that gift, not to keep it hidden. More than most, we understand two important things: first, that the primary value of life does not lie in what a person can do and, second, that everyone has gifts that blossom only when we take the time and put in the energy to find them.

What Pentecost reminds me of is that we have an obligation to share those insights. We can show others, like the lady in the story, simply by the love we have for one another, in the appreciation for each other that we show in our everyday living. And we show it by the efforts we make, personally and organizationally, to reach out and help God’s Special People. Our efforts tell all who know us that life is precious, a gift from God to be cherished beyond all telling – and spreading that word is one way we have of spreading The Word.

Fr. Edwin Dill, ST

IN THIS ISSUE

A Spiritual Message	1
PCI President’s Message	1-2
Acting Grand Commander’s Message	2
2013 Calendar	3
Volunteer needed!	3
Member Spotlight: Greg Hoppe	4
Porto Derby 2013	5
Organizations Porto Supports: Sparc After Dark	6
Housing Committee Report	6
Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund Family Fun Picnic	7
About Porto and PCI	8

PCI President’s Message

“Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.”, Brian Tracy

This quote rings so true as we search for employment, housing solutions, and evening activities for those young adults we support in our community of special persons. Every time we attempt to go down a road, a possible objection is raised which everyone expects to have resolved prior to proceeding. Let’s

discuss some of these so we can all get on the same page going forward.

The subject of evening activities has become an issue recently since we were informed our over-22 young adults would no longer be able to attend high school Special Olympics dances. It was deemed inappropriate for them to be mingling with students as young as 14. PCI/Porto are tackling those objections and have decided to partner with SPARC (Specially Adapted Resource Club) to provide dances and other monthly

(continued on p. 2)

(continued from p. 1)

activities called "SPARC After Dark." This will provide an opportunity for our adults 22+ to continue to attend their own dances. We will be providing financial support for DJ's, snacks and drinks.

Employment for our young adults continues to be a serious issue on many fronts. Employers are leery of hiring workers due to some uncertainty around the Affordable Health Care Act, set to come into force in January 2014, and its effect on mandated employee insurance. Internships may solve this problem since they would not be employees with paid positions. However, we also have to address the concerns of parents who want the jobs to be paid, even if Social Security benefits are reduced \$1 for every \$2 the young adult earns. The fact of the matter is that we can object, but our population will be docked whether they are on SSI or SSDI as limits exist on income and assets. Working parents can help solve this issue by approaching their companies to create volunteer/internship positions at their places of employment.

In the area of housing, we have been holding monthly meetings over the past 18 months. We have had five open meetings for the ID/DD community and many of our housing members are serving on other housing boards and groups within Fairfax county and beyond. As one of those who participates in meetings sponsored by other groups, I can tell you that most of the objections come from the parents, not necessarily from the counties. County staff members are aware of the problems and are looking for solutions. One size will not fit all, but we cannot wait for every foreseeable problem to be resolved in advance. Other groups throughout the country have provided housing for over 30 years. They crawled before walking and walked before running, but a good number we have researched and visited are very successful. They are not all perfect, but what is perfect in this world?

PCI has brought in experts on social security retirement, housing support vendors, Medicaid waivers, and this past

weekend a 20-year expert attorney on special needs trusts. Why did we do this? Because as more of our members start reaching the magic age of retirement, we are discovering lots of pitfalls and misconceptions regarding assets our young adults can own. We are educating ourselves on how to maximize disability benefits and how much income they can expect and earn, how much housing support they will need and who is going to pay. If you retired from the federal government workforce, how does that affect what your young adult will receive? Will you ever be entitled to a Medicaid waiver? If you do get one, is it a panacea or a nightmare? Most of these seminars we held were poorly attended. Perhaps it is because we think we are too young and don't need it yet. However, as our expert attorney Kelly Thompson said, "It's never too early to set up trusts. You can fund them prior or close to passing, but it is something we must all do."

Growing our membership continues to be essential. As we get older, we need to bring in the younger parents in the 30- to 50-age range to carry the torch for those of us in our 60s and 70s whose flames are starting to burn out. Last week, I attended the Northern Virginia Down Syndrome Association picnic with over 300 families participating. Only a handful of young adults were present and I thought about how everyone was having a great time on a beautiful, sunny day at Bull Run Park. They were enjoying the moon bounce, petting animals, socializing and loving the burgers and music. If everyone would listen to us old geezers and start planning now, the lives of their young adults 30 years from now would be immensely improved.

If we wish to attempt to solve these issues, we must put our entire selves in the water, not just our toes. We should be proud to blaze a trail for those who follow and leave a legacy worthy of imitation!

PCI President Leo Alonso

Acting Grand Commander's Message

It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to write my first message as Acting Grand Commander of Porto 104. As you may know, the board of directors of Porto Charities Inc. (PCI) recently asked Grand Commander Leo Alonso to assume the position of Acting President of PCI due to the recent passing of our beloved President Carmen DePlacido. I was asked to assume the position of Acting Grand Commander of Port 104 in an attempt to help Leo with his new responsibilities. It is an honor and a privilege for me to serve Porto 104 in this new role.

Our annual Porto Derby that was held at OLGC on Saturday, May 4 was a huge success. We had seventy five members and friends attend the event which included a delicious dinner prepared by the Wildflower Catering. Donna Goldbranson from SPARC discussed some of their activities and she thanked Porto and PCI for the support that we have committed to her

organization. In addition to a spirited round of "races" after dinner, we had the opportunity to recognize the Hammeke family for all of the contributions that they have made to Porto 104 and PCI. We will certainly miss the entire family as they relocate to Charlotte, North Carolina. Our Porto Derby was memorable for a number of reasons including the fact that Betty and Leo Alonso welcomed their first grandchild into the world later that evening.

Although the end of the school year is fast approaching, we have a number of PCI and Porto activities that will continue over the summer. The 2013 International Order of Alhambra convention will be held from June 29 - July 3 in Nashville, Tenn. Please consult the 2013 Calendar for the list of our activities. Finally, please continue to look for potential new members since we can only attain our growing number of goals with the assistance of a dedicated membership.

AGC Bill Mundy

2013 Calendar

PORTO 104 / PORTO CHARITIES

Divan and PCI Board Meetings are all held at OLGC DeSales Hall in Church Lower Lobby

Social functions appear in red shadow and will be held in the Counsel Room (school cafeteria)

Thursday, June 6	Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby)
Thursday, July 11	Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby) Divan & PCI Board Meeting
Friday, July 12	Sparc After Dark/PCI Dance, Hunters Woods Community Center, Reston
Thursday, August 1	Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby)
Thursday, September 5	Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby)
Thursday, September 12	Divan & PCI Board Meeting
Sunday, September 15	Bishop Loverde's Annual Disabilities Awareness Mass & Reception St. Thomas More Cathedral
Thursday, October 3	Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby)
Friday, October 4	PCI Golf Outing Fundraiser
Saturday, October 26	Oktoberfest / Mass, 6-10 PM
Thursday, November 7	Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby)
Thursday, November 14	Divan & PCI Board Meeting
Thursday, December 5	Tentative Housing Meeting, 7 PM (Lobby)
Saturday, December 14	Holiday Party / Mass, 6-10 PM

Life Skill Development and Educational Opportunities Workshop and Vendor Fair
 Tuesday, June 11, 7-9 pm
 Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia
 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax, VA 22031
 This workshop will help educate and showcase some of the many different programs available to help promote life skills needed in managing a better quality of life. It will also feature educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

WEBMASTER URGENTLY NEEDED!

Porto/PCI has a website that is in dire need of some TLC. We need someone who could give it a couple of hours a week to update content and keep it fresh and interesting.

You don't have to be an expert webmaster; just the willingness to spend a bit of your time and learn (if you don't already know it) an easy-to-use content management system (WordPress).

If you are interested in volunteering for this job, please contact Sara Adkins-Blanch (sadkinsblanch@portocharities.org) or Pat Cross (pcross@portocharities.org).



MEMBER PROFILE

GREG HOPPE

Greg has always been involved in the performing arts. Whether he was watching his sister perform as an actress or listening to his brother's orchestra concerts, he decided early on that the stage was a great place to be. And he likes it best when he's on it. Thanks to PVI, he's had great opportunities.

Greg attended Fairfax County schools through 8th grade. He participated in drama, Scouts (making First Class), altar service 8 years, and Challenger Little League and Special Olympics Track and Field. He met two presidents: Pres. Clinton, at the signing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997 (in which Greg's father played a pivotal role), and Pres. Bush, when Greg's team played Tee Ball on the South Lawn.

In 8th grade at Lake Braddock, the middle school drama teacher recognized his interest in drama and recruited him for the musical. He went on to receive the Outstanding 8th Grade Drama Student Award.

In addition to academics at PVI, Greg played Special Olympics sports and enjoyed a full range of high school activities. He was in the first group of Best Buddies and enjoyed being with peer mentors and everyone else in the student body. He learned names quickly (reading his beloved yearbooks cover to cover and memorizing names), leading Fr. Mike Kuhn, then PVI chaplain, to remark that Greg needed to go with him on rounds because Greg knew more kids' names than he did.

Greg's favorite activity at PVI, however, was always drama. He was in the

musical each year, making new friends in each cast. Director Katherine Miller encouraged and supported him,

and every cast treated him as an equal. He learned responsibilities which carried over into other areas of his life, and it was also great fun. By graduation, he had earned membership in the International Thespians (honor) Society, and a Director's Commendation from the Cappies (Critics and Performers Awards Program). Wearing his medal at the Kennedy Center for the Cappies gala that year was a very proud moment.

After graduation, he attended the Davis Career Center (FCPS), developing work skills in 4 different venues. He participated in their new drama program as the wizard in "The Wizard of Oz" and the Big Bad Wolf in "Goldilocks on Trial." Greg was invited back to be in the PVI musicals each year as a "guest alumni actor." This was a true unexpected blessing and the highlight of each spring.



Since July 2012, Greg has worked at the Tyson's Corner Courtyard Marriott. He is in housekeeping and loves his job. He banks his paychecks at the same bank he used as part of Options' training, and proudly withdraws what he needs each week. He still loves PVI yearbooks and has gotten one each

year since graduation – because of his participation in the musicals, he keeps making new friends at PVI so he has to read about them! He keeps up with old friends through the Young Adults Group, run by Mary Daley. He loves to watch musicals and movies – live or on TV -- and looks up information online about actors, plots, etc. He and his dad have season Nats tickets, and he plays baseball with a Davis Special Olympics team. Every year he attends the Maryland Renaissance Fair (in costume), and enjoys visiting historic programs and museums. He also loves to travel.

This spring, Greg was back on the PVI stage in "Once



Upon a Mattress," learning a new show and making new friends. Last month saw another first: with money he earned on the job, he bought a PVI yearbook for 2013. It was an appropriate milestone, given how important PVI has been in Greg's life.

By August, he'll have it memorized. ■

Porto Derby 2013

Porto/PCI members as well as guests enjoyed a fun evening on May 4th, 2013 at the very exciting Porto Derby. After Mass officiated by Fr. Dill, the festivities began with the traditional Oasis, an occasion for members to mingle and catch up; a fabulous BBQ dinner catered by Wildflour Catering, where many of our young adults work; and finally by the always fun Porto Derby.

But before getting deep into the Derby, PCI President Leo Alonso thanked Pat Hammeke and his entire family, Brendan, Casey and XXX, for their numerous contributions to Porto 104/PCI as well as the broader community of families with sons and daughters with special needs. Each of them received a heart-felt applause from all attendees as they were presented with plaques recognizing their service. The Hammekes are moving to Charlotte, NC, in just a few weeks. We will miss them!

In the first race of the evening, Pat Hammeke, Master of Ceremonies, put forth a few poignant questions to some of our young adults about their fathers: What is your Dad's favorite color? Does your Dad watch a little, some, or way too much TV? What car does your Dad drive?. The next race asked the "horses" questions about musicals and music, which, as always Casie Hammeke won; the last race was the Grand Commander's Challenge and there some adults had to answer questions about finance and economy. Not easy but there was indeed a winner! The evening ended with a raffle of varied goods that went to different members who had purchased the tickets with the earnings from the races.

Everyone had fun so we hope to see you at the next Porto Derby, where the Paul Tierney will take over the responsibility of being the Porto Derby MC.



Porto members Tom Ingoldsby and Pat Cross



From l to r: Bob McIntosh, Steve McIntosh, Michael Thorpe Jr, Mike Thorpe, Heidi Thorpe and Eva Thorpe.



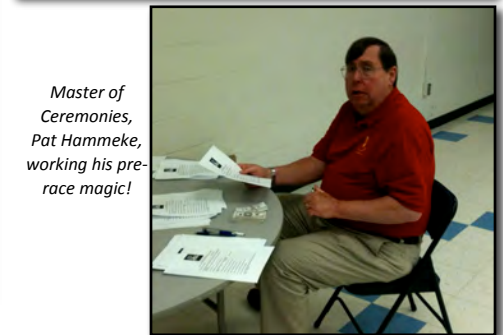
Some of our young adults, center to the left, Meagan Mundy, Sean Cross, David Hefferon, Greg Hoppe and Evan Patchett.



Off to the races! Contestants from l to r, Donna Goldbranson, Greg Hoppe, Michael Thorpe, Casey Hammeke, with MC Pat Hammeke. In the forefront, Tom Ingoldsby and Christie DiPlacido



One horse pulls ahead! Who will win the race? Casey!



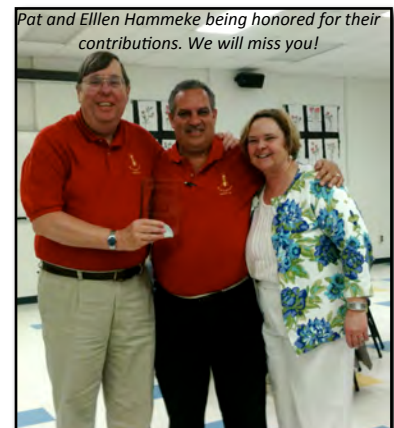
Master of Ceremonies, Pat Hammeke, working his pre-race magic!



Casey Hammeke being honored for her contributions.



Brendan Hammeke being honored for his contributions.



Pat and Ellen Hammeke being honored for their contributions. We will miss you!



ORGANIZATIONS PORTO SUPPORTS SPARC AFTER DARK

Put on your dancin' shoes—It's a Sock Hop!". On July 12, 2013, Porto/PCI will partner with SPARC to host a night of dancing, friendship, and fun at the Reston Community Center-Hunter Woods in Reston, Virginia. We are excited about this new partnership!

SPARC is a community-based club that was "visioned" by individuals who were sitting at home with no place to go after they graduated from High School and their parents. Founders Donna Goldbranson and Monica Benteler worked with Fairfax Therapeutic Recreation and the Long Term Coordinating Council (LTCC) to create a "place" for all people to belong, whether you were interested in life-long learning, building vocational skills, community service, or making friends. Most of the current club members did not qualify for traditional funding or vocational programs through the county or were on long waiting lists in Virginia.

Donna and Monica worked with young adults with disabilities; staff of Fairfax Therapeutic Recreation, LTCC, and an array of private partners to grow their three-day club, to a five-day club in both Reston and McLean. Their most recent partner, the Jewish Social Services Agency, has added clinical support to help young adults on the autism spectrum negotiate the community, social, and work environments. SPARC is a place where members, staff and volunteers come to have fun--learning along the way.

In addition to SPARC's support for adding new venues for dances and parties, SPARC is going to work with Porto/PCI on developing additional monthly evenings out -- called *SPARC After Dark*. These evenings will be opportunities for peers with and without disabilities to engage in age-appropriate activities, life-long learning and fun!! Parents and siblings can stay or go do "their own thing."

Some highlights planned are: *Get Your Groove On* with Wii dance games; *Play Ball*: learning about our newest baseball team, the Loudoun Hounds; *Money, Money Money*: games to learn about money management and checkbooks; *"Souper" Night* where learning to make a hearty soup will keep you warm on a cold winter night; and *Finding Your Zen*: adapted yoga and Pilates techniques. SPARC club members believe that everyone should have an opportunity to have fun, see a friend, or simply have a place to go to all year long!

We are excited to create new opportunities for our adults with disabilities, as we continue to lay the groundwork for creating communities where everyone is welcomed, valued, and learns from each other!

Visit www.sparcsolutions.org to learn how to become a member or call 703-338-6185. ■

Housing Committee

We set out approximately a year ago, without a road map, to delve into housing options for our special family members and friends. Many on the committee, as well as others, had pre-conceptions of what could or should be done. Some of us are more anxious than others to get something done right away.

Much has been investigated and researched throughout the country. There is no single answer to the housing issue. Much confusion and uncertainty relating to ID/DD waivers and housing is evident. SSI and SSDI, how do they impact things? What services are available/needed and who provides them? Buy or Rent ?? Costs???? Who/how are roommates/housemates determined? Jobs? Transport-

tation? Medical needs and administering medications?? Who gets the larger bedroom with a bath? What are the implications of the Department of Justice decree to shutter "institutions"?

And many more questions. The questions clearly outnumber the workable answers.

Most recently, the issues with Special Needs Trusts and housing strategies has emerged. Income and assets: What are the trip wires relating to potentially disqualifying a special needs individual from receiving government benefits? What's an appropriate work around?

Presently, we are re-contacting our initial survey responders to ascertain their current thinking after being exposed

to additional information as we have progressed.

It is understandable that some may be reluctant to make the first move or desire to cautiously proceed. In that regard, we are fortunate to have the possibility of a test model with two of our members exploring renting their rental properties to some of our special needs individuals. This would certainly provide valuable insight into what works and what may not.

Attendance at our informational sessions with outside presenters is an opportunity to raise questions and be better informed. "What you don't know" can come back at you!!!

Ron Gutkowski

Join us at the Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund Family Fun Picnic

at

Refreshments
and Fun!

Families
Welcome!

FREE!

Our Special Harbor

• SPRAYGROUND •

Presented By
The Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund
www.jpmpf.org

Water
shoes
recommended!

Sunday May 19, 2013 1-4pm

Rain or Shine

Our Special Harbor

Lee District

Family Recreation Area

6601 Telegraph Road

Alexandria, VA 22310

Sponsored by
The Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund
703.297.8847
www.JPMF.org



Special Kids • Special Families

GRAND DIVAN 2012-2013

Porto Caravan no. 104

REV. EDWIN DILL, S.T.
Chaplain

BILL MUNDY
Acting Grand Commander

VACANT
Vice Grand Commander

CHRIS WNUK
Grand Scribe

PAT CROSS
Scribe of the Exchequer

RICK VRANESH
Grand Chamberlain and
Past Grand Commander

BILL HINGSTON
Master of the Oasis

TOM BRITTON
Master of the Wardrobe

TOM RYAN
Captain of the Bodyguard

WILLIAM HINGSTON III
Sentinel of the Tower

PAUL TIERNEY
Sentinel of the Desert

RONALD GUTKOWSKI
Grand Advocate

Porto Charities, Inc.

LEO ALONSO
President

BILL MUNDY
Vice President

CHARLIE SULLIVAN
Treasurer

PAT HAMMEKE
Secretary

PAT CROSS
MICHAEL EISENBERG
Directors

SARA ADKINS-BLANCH
Shifting Sands Editor

The International Order of Alhambra and Porto Caravan 104

The International Order of Alhambra is a fraternal organization of Catholic men dedicated to assisting persons with intellectual disabilities. The Order's mission is to:

- ❖ Provide assistance, education and residences for persons developmentally disabled;
- ❖ Identify, mark, preserve, and commemorate Catholic historical places, events and persons of international or regional importance;
- ❖ Promote fraternalism and sociability among its members and their families.

Porto Caravan No. 104 was chartered in 1956 and is an active Caravan in the International Order of Alhambra with a membership of about 100. Porto Caravan No. 104 is located in the Commonwealth of Virginia environs of the Nation's Capital. Any male practicing Catholic who is 18 years of age or older is eligible to apply for membership.

Contact Information:

Porto Caravan #104 | Order of Alhambra

Post Office Box 7266 | Arlington, VA 22207

Telephone: 703.626.2051 | Email: bettyleo@aol.com

Porto Charities Inc.

Porto Charities, Inc. is an I.R.C. 501(c) (3) charitable organization dedicated to actively assisting people with developmental or intellectual disabilities; their community and their environment. Our mission is to:

- ❖ Raise and provide funds, resources, assistance, education, residences and overall improved quality of life for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities; and
- ❖ Promote education, awareness, friendship and social forums among members, their families and the community.

Our vision is to:

- ❖ Focus our efforts on providing assistance and resources to people with developmental or intellectual disabilities and their environment through our charitable programs and projects while also emphasizing friendship, mutual support and social events for its members.

Organizations awarded charitable donations for this year include: ARC of Northern Virginia, ArtStream, Inc., Arlington Diocese "Keyboard for Kids" program, Autism Society of No. VA, Best Buddies Virginia, Central Fairfax Services, Inc., Down Syndrome Association of No. VA, Gabriel Homes, Inc., GMU Life Program, Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund, Paul VI HS Options Program, Pope John Paul the Great HS Options Program, S. John Davis Career Center, Special Olympics of No. VA Area 26, St. Louis Parish Special Education Program, St. Mark Catholic School Evangelist Program, Still Meadows Enrichment Center and Camp, Villa Maria Work Study Center, and Wild-flour Catering.

Contact Information:

Porto Charities, Inc.

Post Office Box 7266 | Arlington, VA 22207

Telephone: 703.626.2051 | Email: bettyleo@aol.com

If you would like to submit a story, article, or news piece to *Shifting Sands*, please email sadkinsblanch@portocharities.org.