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Nominations Open for Advocacy Awards Gala

Arlington, VA – February 13, 2025 – Porto Charities is pleased to announce that nominations are open for its annual Advocacy Awards Gala. The deadline for nominations is February 28, 2025. This event celebrates individuals, schools, and workplaces that champion inclusion and belonging for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Diocese of Arlington.

We are seeking nominations in the following four categories:

- **Outstanding Educator:** Honors an educator who demonstrates exceptional commitment to inclusive education practices and empowers students to reach their full potential.
- **Outstanding Employer:** Recognizes an employer that champions inclusive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- **Outstanding Peer Mentor:** Celebrates a peer mentor who fosters a supportive and friendly environment for students of all abilities.
- **Outstanding School:** Acknowledges a school that has cultivated a culture of belonging, where students with disabilities are fully immersed and valued.

To be eligible for the Outstanding Educator and Outstanding Peer Mentor categories, an individual should volunteer, work, or be a student in the Diocese of Arlington, VA. To be eligible for the Outstanding School or Outstanding Employer, the Catholic school or workplace must be located in the Diocese of Arlington.

In addition to these four categories, Porto Charities will be presenting The 2025 Catalyst Award to Bishop Emeritus Paul Loverde, for his commitment to inclusive education. Porto Charities will also present the Laura Lee Self-Advocate Award to Ms. Elizabeth Eisenberg for her self-advocacy skills and empowering others to advocate for themselves.

"We believe in the power of community and the importance of recognizing those who are dedicated to creating a more inclusive Diocese for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities," said Leo Alonso, President of Porto Charities. "These awards are a testament to their hard work and compassion. We encourage everyone to submit their nominations and help us celebrate these remarkable individuals and organizations."

Community members may submit nominations online at www.portocharities.org/nominations. Winners will be notified by March 10, 2025, and awards for all recipients will be presented at the Advocacy Awards Gala on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Westfields Marriott in Chantilly, VA.

About Porto Charities: Porto Charities builds a culture of belonging for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by increasing their educational, employment and community engagement opportunities in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington.

Media inquiries: Lupita Williamson at media@portocharities.org

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**EMBRACING BELONGING
ALL YEAR LONG**

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VALENTINES PARTY

MARCH 15
CONFERENCE ON DISABILITY

MAY 2
EMBRACE GALA

www.portocharities.org/events

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