



# SHIFTING SANDS



## PCI's President Message

### Persistence, Perseverance, Success

Over the past few months, Porto Charities, with the enthusiastic help of Bishop Burbidge, has been making great strides in our efforts for more inclusive education programs in the Diocese. Our Bishop is leading the way and has offered PCI full use of the Diocesan communications department for jointly promoting the expansion of inclusive education to all of our schools. PCI has met with Billy Atwell, the Diocesan communications director who has opened his department to us for help with print media, radio, TV, and social media.

PCI has just finished our new video on inclusive education in our fine Catholic schools. You should have received it. The video points out how our programs have changed the school environment, staff, students and their families. A spirit of acceptance takes hold and is a win for everyone. The video has been circulated to all pastors, school principals, and organizations providing inclusive education within our region and throughout the country. It is garnering great reviews and can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/259199076>. Already we have received a donation to PCI and several inquiries, including one from Mississippi.

Bishop Burbidge has a weekly Diocesan podcast on Fridays. You should go to [CatholicDioceseofArlington.org](http://CatholicDioceseofArlington.org), press the podcast icon, and then proceed to the March 16 podcast date. At the 17-20 minute mark, listen to a parishioner's question from Culpeper concerning special education. Bishop Burbidge gives PCI an incredible endorsement with respect to our efforts and success in the area of inclusive education. It is worth finding and listening to the podcast. It will make you proud.

I have been invited to participate and join Bishop Burbidge and Jennifer Bigelow, the Diocesan superintendent of schools, on a podcast dedicated to inclusive education. We will speak about our intention and plans to continue to expand adding more programs. The air date will be May 11. *The Catholic Herald* has also interviewed us for an article to be published in the next couple of weeks.

On May 4<sup>th</sup> we have a meeting with the Diocesan director of social media to help us move into the social media age.

Claudia Andahl, a PCI member, has volunteered to head this effort.

We are seeing results!!!

- ♦ In Chantilly, St. Veronica's, with whom we met in early March for a 2019 full program, has moved ahead and has accepted two students with Down syndrome for this fall. They hope to be able to pick up several more and start with 4-5 students.
- ♦ St. Bernadette's in Springfield has met with representatives of the Diocese, Bill Dalgetty and Bill Mundy and are looking at fall 2019 for a start date.
- ♦ St. Theresa's in Loudoun County will be accepting a student with intellectual disabilities whose two siblings are at the school. We hope the program will grow from that point.
- ♦ St. Mary's in Alexandria is visiting our current programs and more than likely will start the process as they are a feeder school for Bishop Ireton. All indications are that Bishop Ireton will incorporate a program after their remodeling is finished in 2019.

When all of these efforts come to fruition, our Porto Charities Special Kids/Special Needs collections and fundraisers will have to increase. Bishop Burbidge is urging 100% full participation by all parishes. As the word spreads and more schools become inclusive, our visibility should yield support and donations from parishioners throughout the Diocese. Most of all, we will have to seriously implore families whose children are attending and benefitting from these school programs to participate in the raising of funds. FIRE in the Diocese of Kansas City requires all families whose children are in inclusive schools to participate in all of FIRE's fundraising efforts. This year, they will be granting over \$465,000 to the Diocesan schools.

Here at PCI, we still have to continue with PERSISTENCE, PERSEVERANCE AND ACHIEVE HIGHER RESULTS.

*PCI President Leo Alonso*