



## MEDIA ADVISORY

School Mass Celebrations with  
Presentation of Grant Award Checks

*Three Schools Receive Grants from CCSE to  
Support Inclusive Education Programming*

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### CATHOLIC COALITION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

MEDIA ADVISORY: October 21, 2022

CONTACT: Kathy Dempsey for CCSE

### **Area Catholic Schools Receive Grant Funding to Support Inclusive Education Programming for Students with Disabilities**

*Expanding Opportunities for Students with Disabilities in Area Catholic Schools*

(Kensington, Maryland) – Catholic Coalition for Special Education (CCSE) congratulates **St. John’s Catholic School (Hollywood), Mount Saint Joseph High School (Baltimore) and St. Jerome Academy (Hyattsville)** as this year’s recipients of its *Believe in Me!* grants. CCSE will deliver the grant award checks along with posters and balloons to two of the schools at their school Masses on October 26 and November 1. CCSE celebrated with St. Jerome Academy earlier in September.

Educators, parents, students and representatives of CCSE  
will be available for photos and interviews.

Following the Closing Prayers at the Masses,  
CCSE will present the School Principal / President with the grant checks.

**Wednesday, October 26, 2022 | 2:00 pm Mass**  
**St. John Francis Regis Catholic Church (St. Mary’s County)**  
43972 St. John's Road | Hollywood, MD 20636

**Tuesday, November 1, 2022 | 9:15 am Mass**  
**Mount Saint Joseph High School (Baltimore City)**  
4403 Frederick Avenue | Baltimore, MD 21229

“This year, CCSE is awarding \$88,000 in seed grants to three schools – St. John’s Hollywood, Mount Saint Joseph and St. Jerome Academy – thanks to the generous support of our many donors, foundations, business partners and sponsors. These grant awards are complemented with year-long, capacity-building Technical Assistance that is also completely covered pro-bono by CCSE under our partnership with Notre Dame of Maryland University’s Academy of Catholic Educators, also known as ACES,” said Francesca Pellegrino, Founder and President of the Catholic Coalition for Special Education.

**St. John’s Catholic School, Hollywood** is adding a paraprofessional to its staff to support a student with an intellectual disability.

**St. John’s Catholic School Principal Susan McDonough** said, “It is a blessing that Norah has come into the lives of the students and staff at St. John's School. Norah has taught us many things in the short

time she has been at St. John's School. She makes our world better every day. There are no boundaries for Norah.”

CCSE is delighted to see the growth of inclusive education in our Catholic schools in Southern Maryland as St. John’s joins Our Lady Star of Sea School with open doors.

**Mount Saint Joseph High School, Baltimore** is using its seed grant from CCSE to revitalize its St. Giles Program and support students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. A student with Down syndrome named Ory Docal has joined the Class of 2026 and is working toward earning a certificate that will help prepare him for life after high school. He attends classes with his peers and is a valued member of the community.

[For photos of Ory at Mount Saint Joseph, click here.](#) [If there are issues opening the link, try to copy and then paste the link directly into the bar.]

“Mount Saint Joseph is one of the first schools CCSE supported in 2009. It has a great track record and I am delighted that the school is revitalizing its programming and welcoming Ory and, I hope, many more boys in the future,” said Francesca Pellegrino.

**Mount Saint Joseph High School President George Andrews said,** “We are happy to welcome Ory to our school community because he wanted to be a part of the ‘Mount Brotherhood,’ and we are a welcoming community. Our philosophy of education and our faith compels us to accept students of all learning abilities because we believe we are all gifts from God with unique talents and we all learn differently. We value the unique differences among our community as we are a reflection of the world around us.”

**St. Jerome Academy, Hyattsville** is expanding its resource program for students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and adding a resource teacher to meet the growing demand from families.

**St Jerome Academy Principal Daniel Flynn said** that “St. Jerome Academy is thrilled to be a recipient of a grant award from CCSE. St Jerome Academy believes it is serving the whole child and this allows us to extend our offering even further. ...This grant award will enable us to expand our resource services through additional professional development for staff, hiring an additional specialist and ultimately by increasing the number of students that we can serve over time. In short, it expands our mission and creates new avenues of inclusion for families currently in our community and those yet to come.”

CCSE has reached over 9,000 students, teachers and families and awarded 78 grants to 32 Catholic schools in 10 Maryland counties totaling nearly \$1.2 million since its inception in 2004.

CCSE supports Catholic schools in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington and Archdiocese of Baltimore. CCSE’s *Believe in Me!* grants to Catholic schools may be used by the schools to hire and train special educators, purchase equipment and materials, or provide appropriate accommodations and modifications to the curriculum. CCSE also offers technical assistance and training – all free of charge – to help schools be the best they can be in serving and teaching all God’s children inclusively.

CCSE also provides scholarships to Catholic school teachers pursuing advanced degrees in special education and offers workshops and other training /coaching support to Catholic schools to help them meet the needs of students with disabilities at the classroom and administrative levels.

“Our goal at CCSE is to advocate for students with disabilities so that all students desiring a Catholic education can find a place at the table and a school to call ‘home.’ Catholic schools are uniquely qualified to serve students with disabilities precisely because they are Catholic. Including students with disabilities in Catholic schools helps ensure the Unity of the Body of Christ and demonstrates that no matter the

differences all children have unique gifts that they bring as valued members of a school community,” said Francesca Pellegrino.

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Additional quotes received from Mount Saint Joseph High School:

**Timothy Schenk - St. Giles Program Coordinator**

“At Mount Saint Joseph, Ory is going to learn a lot and get the community integration that he needs, but Ory is also going to teach our students and community about different aspects of life. It shows everyone that people with Down syndrome are valuable parts of the community. I love that Ory is going to have the same opportunities as other students at Mount Saint Joseph. Everyone says hi to him in the hallways. He is becoming his own little superstar at Mount Saint Joseph.”

**Greg McDivitt – Assistant Principal, Director of Studies**

“Mount Saint Joseph strives to be a center of growth and learning that is responsive to the varied educational backgrounds of our students, and is marked by the formation of enduring personal relationships. Students like Ory in our St. Giles Program fit into the broad continuum of students we are called to serve, and as fully participating members of our community, are challenged to grow and develop into the men that God intends them to be. In turn, as Ory shares his gifts and talents, his thoughts, his work and his friendship with the rest of our community, we are enriched with the understanding that he is at once both a unique individual and a young man with whom we share a lot in common. All of this is made possible by the CCSE grant.”

**Brion Townshend – Director of Special Programs**

“Our goal for Ory is that he will develop into the man that God intends him to be by helping him acquire the knowledge and skills he will need to be successful in anything he does when graduates from Mount Saint Joseph. Just like all of our students, we want Ory to grow and develop academically, spiritually, and socially. Our whole student body at Mount Saint Joseph benefits from Ory being a part of our community. Ory’s engaging personality, can do attitude, and compassion for his fellow students helps our young men be more accepting of all people. Ory teaches us that the seemingly impossible is possible with the right attitude and support.”

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*The mission of the [Catholic Coalition for Special Education](#) is to advocate for and facilitate an appropriate, inclusive, high quality education for students with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities in the Washington D.C. and Baltimore region Catholic schools to enrich their lives, schools, and the broader community.*