

A few of the many organizations supporting our disabled brothers and sisters and their caretakers

Catholic Charities Disability Services - www.ccdocle.org/locations/disability-services-office
The Disability Services Office provides programs and ministries including summer camp, adult education, socials and dances, interpretive services, audio description/enhancement, religious education, sacramental preparation, and pastoral care at centers throughout the Diocese. Special liturgies are celebrated throughout the year. (216) 334-2963

Camp Happiness - www.ccdocle.org/programs/camp-happiness
Social, recreational & educational services during the summer months to children ages 5 to 21 with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Camps are in Parma and Euclid.

Rose Mary Center - www.rose-marycenter.com
Community homes throughout Cuyahoga County offering children and adults with developmental disabilities an opportunity to live in a safe home. Adult Day Services include a variety of social and recreational activities including cooking classes; visits to the library, coffee shops, and eateries; shopping excursions; Metroparks & Zoo trips; exercise-based and wellness activities: art, music, dance and drama therapy.

L’Arche Cleveland - larchecleveland.org
A community of 5 homes for communal living for adults with and without disabilities in the Cleveland area.

Julie Billiart Schools - juliebilliartschool.org
K-8 schools that nurture and empower students with learning differences. Campuses are in Lyndhurst, Akron, and Westlake.

National Catholic Partnership on Disability - ncpd.org
Promoting the Meaningful Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Church and Society. They offer resources for dioceses, parishes, individuals, families and caregivers, schools and more.

Autism Society - autism-society.org
For over 50 years The Autism Society has worked to support the lives of all affected by Autism. Their website, online resource database (Autism Source), and National Contact Center (800-3-AUTISM) provide information and service referrals to thousands of people each year. They also have a list of “Autism & Faith Resources” available at tinyurl.com/kr7f4nah

United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Cleveland - ucpcleveland.org
The mission of UCP of Greater Cleveland is to empower children and adults with disabilities to advance their independence, productivity and inclusion in the community. They provide a wide variety of services and opportunities as well as operate LeafBridge Center for children & OakLeaf Center for adults.

Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Ohio (formerly the Up Side of Downs) - dsaneo.org
A nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide support, education and advocacy for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and communities.

St. Patrick Parish
www.stpatrickbridge.org

St. Malachi Parish
www.stmalachi.org

RESPECT LIFE

The Pain and Potential of Our Disabled Brothers & Sisters



St. Patrick & St. Malachi Parishes
Cleveland’s Near West Side

Personal Reflection

By Jeanne Mullin Gray & David Gray, Parishioners, St. Patrick

Nicholas joined our family in 2005. The day before his birth, we joyfully anticipated a baby that was healthy and that would add to our family in the same beautiful, meaningful way that our twin boys had just 20 months before. When Nick was born and we held him for the first time, we sensed something was different, something was unexpected. In the coming weeks, we learned that Nick had Down syndrome.

Thinking back on those very early days, the feelings of uncertainty and worry are still raw. We learned soon after that Nick needed open heart surgery. On the day he turned three months old, we left him in the hands of skilled surgeons and medical providers, but more importantly, we left him in the hands of God.

In retrospect, Nick’s heart issues were a blessing in disguise. As he faced a long recovery from his surgery, and we prayed for his heart to heal and for his physical health, we slowly realized how unimportant the Down syndrome part of his diagnosis was. Back then, we did not know much about Down syndrome or what Nick’s life, or for that matter our lives, would be like.

Sixteen years later, we still don’t know exactly what the future has in store. What we do know, though, is that Nick has brought us joy, happiness, worry, pride, wonder, frustration, and gratitude - just as our other four children have. The love we have for this child is indescribable. He has added to the bond of our family in a unique way that will be everlasting. He helps us see the simple things in life in a different way. He reminds us of what a difference perseverance and determination can make. Nick is part of the foundation not only of our own individual family, but our community, our Church, and our world.

He will struggle to find acceptance, friends, inclusion. He will always be viewed as “different” by most and he is different. But different does not mean “disabled” or “lesser” – it just means different. What a boring world it would be if everyone was the same! October is Down syndrome awareness month. Join our family in taking a pledge to be generous, accepting and kind. Teach your children to do the same – to embrace differences and to offer friendship and inclusion. Nick and others like him have so much to offer all of us. He has shown us that what is “unexpected” can turn into something amazing.

Jeanne Mullin Gray & David Gray



Nick as part of the foundation of our family January 2015



Proof that superheroes come in different shapes and sizes. August 2013



Commitment to inclusion, even when it’s hard, makes all the difference.
- Nick’s first day at St. Edward High School, August 2021

Papal Statements

“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization” (*Evangelii Gaudium*).



People with disabilities, both in society and in the Church, also wish to become *active subjects* of our pastoral ministry, and not simply its recipients.

“Many persons with disabilities feel that they exist without belonging and without participating. Much still prevents them from being fully enfranchised. Our concern should be not only to care for them, but also to ensure their ‘active participation’ in the civil and ecclesial community. That is a demanding and even tiring process, yet one that will gradually contribute to the formation of consciences capable of acknowledging each individual as a unique and unrepeatable person” (*Fratelli Tutti*).

Indeed, the active participation of people with disabilities in the work of catechesis can greatly enrich the life of the whole parish. Precisely because they have been grafted onto Christ in baptism, they share with him, in their own particular way, the priestly, prophetic, and royal mission of evangelizing *through, with* and *in* the Church.

Take from “Message of the Holy Father Francis for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities”

December 2020 (www.vatican.va)

Awareness of the dignity of each person has grown, and this has resulted in courageous decisions to promote the inclusion of those experiencing physical and psychological limitations. Yet, on the cultural level, much still stands in the way of this trend.

Pope Francis

Embracing the Pain and Potential of Our Disabled Brothers and Sisters

I’d like to introduce you to a good friend of mine, Diane, whom I’ve known for more than 15 years. Diane and I met through L’Arche Cleveland; an international community of adults with and without disabilities that began in France in 1964 and has since spread all over the world. Diane and I lived together along with two other Core Members (people with disabilities) and another assistant in our Maple Heights home. Our friendship has grown through both struggles and good times. We’ve gone on vacations together, shared everyday life together, and attended funerals of our L’Arche friends together.

One of the great lessons that Diane has taught me is to enjoy every moment of life as it comes. In the 15+ years that I have known Diane she has gone from physically being able to walk to presently being wheelchair bound. She has lost many of her friends in L’Arche to death. Diane has no known biological family so L’Arche has filled that role for over 30 years.

When I came to L’Arche Cleveland in 2003, I came with the good intention of helping those ‘less fortunate than me’. It soon became clear to me that I was ‘the less fortunate one’. In my time in L’Arche I have learned so much; like that it is ok to be myself, how to forgive others and not hold a grudge, and to live and enjoy each moment of this life. Diane has taught me so much in the last 15 years of living and sharing life together. One time I lost my temper with her because of something I thought she had done. I was so upset and frustrated with her. The next day when I had finally ‘cooled off’, I went to Diane and said that I was sorry for how I had treated her the night before. This was a big step for me and not an easy thing to do. She just looked at me, smiled and said, “That’s ok.” I was so taken

aback. I was so freely and quickly forgiven. No grudges were held!

This instance was never mentioned again. I can’t help but think that this is exactly the way our Heavenly Father forgives... freely and quickly. What a wonderful gift to have received from Diane! I am so very grateful for the gift that L’Arche has been and is to/for me. God is so very good.

Sr. Mary Lizette Hoevel, SND

Sr. Lizette and friends from the L’Arche participate at mass at St. Malachi



Sr. Lizette and her friend Diane