

## **Pathways Foundation Awards Sixteen Congregations Cash Grants For Taking Steps to Include Worshipers of All Abilities**

CHICAGO (Oct. 10, 2010) —In conjunction with Inclusion Awareness Days this fall, Pathways Foundation is pleased to announce that **sixteen congregations** will receive **Pathways Open Hearts Award cash grants** for their efforts to welcome and include worshippers of all abilities.

Examples of projects supported by 2010 Open Hearts Award cash grants include: providing a sign language interpreter for religious education classes, installing railings to the altar so that Eucharistic Ministers can continue their ministries, purchasing training materials for volunteers mentors who accompany children with autism during religious services, posting signs to publicize an accessible church entrance, installing automatic door openers and creating pew cutouts to allow parishioners who use wheelchairs to sit with their families during services.

### **2010 Open Hearts Award Winning Congregations**

St. John Berchmans Catholic Church, Chicago, IL  
St. Lawrence O'Toole Catholic Church, Matteson, IL  
St. Mary, Star of the Sea Catholic Church, Chicago, IL  
Old St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Chicago, IL  
Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica and National Shrine, Chicago, IL  
Parkview Christian Church, Orland Park, IL  
Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church, Westchester, IL  
St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, Nilus, IL  
The Church of the Curé of Ars, Merrick, NY  
Church of St. Raymond, Bronx, NY  
Church of St. Sylvester, Medford, NY  
Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Cross, Nesconset, NY  
St. Bernard Catholic Church Levittown, NY  
St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church, Plainview, NY  
Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church Mandeville, LA  
St. Patrick Catholic Church, Lexington, VA

### **St. John Berchmans Parish Makes "All Are Welcome" a Reality**

Father Wayne Watts, pastor of St. John Berchmans Church in Chicago, mentors a young man who was caught in gang crossfire and who now uses a wheelchair for mobility. On one of his visits to the parish, Jaime asked Father Watts if St. John Berchmans church was beautiful inside. With that question, Father Watts knew he needed to make the church accessible. The parish raised funds and installed a two stop elevator to the upper level church and the lower level social hall. A washroom on the church level was modified for access and a ramp to the altar was installed. In order to publicize their accessibility, the parish created and distributed an "All Are Welcome"

community poster that described their accessibility and used the wheelchair logo to invite people of all abilities to attend services at the church. The parish continues to strive toward 100 % access. Currently fund raising is underway to remodel the washrooms in the lower level church hall for accessibility. The \$1,000 Pathways Open Hearts Award grant will be used for architectural drawings for the new accessible washrooms. Through the generosity of their parishioners the parish motto “All Are Welcome” is becoming a reality.

### **St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church Draws Attention to Accessible Entrance**

Following a seminar for clergy by Pathways Foundation, Father Constantine Botsis, pastor of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church in Niles, IL, instituted Inclusion Awareness Sunday to better educate his parishioners about the need for access to worship. In the summer of 2009, through the generosity of a parishioner, the parish replaced the porch and sidewalk on the front of the church with a beautifully concealed, heated ramp that avoids ice accumulation in the winter and provides access to the church year round. Although the church now had a ramp that was designed to enhance the beauty of the entrance, there was a need for signage to identify and make the ramp known to all. The Pathways Open Hearts Award grant will be used to design and install attractive signage to publicize this access feature at St. Haralambos Church so that all will know they are welcome.

### **St. Sylvester Creates a Church for Everyone**

A \$2.2 million renovation with access a priority is underway at St. Sylvester Roman Catholic Church in Medford, NY, because the pastor, Rev. Edward J. Kealey, felt it was “the right thing to do.” Father Kealey rejected the recommended, less expensive, Limited Use/Limited Access Lift (LULA) in lieu of a full service elevator because “everyone deserves truly good and attractive equipment.” Accessible entrances, washrooms and the full size, two stop, interior elevator are part of the overall renovation. The large parish of 4,300 is served solely by Father Kealey. Not a wealthy community, the parishioners still manage to provide heat, rent subsidies and food for 900 people a month. “We have truly great people in this parish. With them I am trying to fashion the most beautiful, most inspiring church possible for everyone,” said Father Kealey. The \$1,000 Pathways Open Hearts Award grant will go toward the cost of the elevator installation.

### **About the Open Hearts Awards**

Since 1998, Pathways Foundation has distributed more than \$117,000 through its Open Hearts Awards program, granting funds to houses of worship nationwide that have already taken action to include worshippers of all abilities and who have specific projects to improve accessibility and inclusion. To apply for the grants, congregation members must submit a completed nomination form, along with a description of the

congregation's inclusion efforts and a request for funding for a specific planned project. Grant amounts are for up to \$1,000.

Deadline for nominations for the annual Pathways Awareness Open Hearts Awards and Junior Open Hearts Awards (nominated by children, ages 5-18) is August 1. Awards are announced in the fall in conjunction with Inclusion Awareness Day. For more information and nomination forms call 1-800-955-2445, visit [www.inclusioninworship.org](http://www.inclusioninworship.org), or email [friends@pathwaysawareness.org](mailto:friends@pathwaysawareness.org).

### **About Pathways Foundation**

Pathways Foundation is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness about the benefit of early detection and early therapy for children with early motor delays. For more information about the programs of Pathways Foundation visit [www.PathwaysCenter.org](http://www.PathwaysCenter.org), [www.PathwaysAwareness.org](http://www.PathwaysAwareness.org) and [www.InclusionInWorship.org](http://www.InclusionInWorship.org).