

DisABILITY Ministry Newsletter

October/November

Our Mission

Every person, regardless of their physical and mental abilities, has the right to a full life in the Church and deserves the support of parishes and church staff. The Diocese of Joliet is an inclusive diocese, and we believe in including everyone in the ministries and programs offered at our parishes.



**DisABILITY
Ministry**



Contact Us

THE DIOCESE OF JOLIET WELCOMES VITA AYALA AS THE NEW PASTORAL OUTREACH LEAD



Connect with Vita

Direct 815-221-6165

vayala@dioceseofjoliet.org

BIO

MEET VITA AYALA

With a background of working in the non-profit industry for over twenty (20) years, Vita has a broad skillset ranging from communications, project management, grant writing, contract development, and working with professionals from all backgrounds.

She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Communications and Journalism from Purdue University. She is currently working on receiving her Executive Masters of Nonprofit Administration from the University of Notre Dame in May 2027. With her passion for her work in the parish and community combined with her long-standing love for the life of the Church, Vita will bring both spiritual depth and professional insight into the Department of Catechesis and Evangelization.

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WE'RE HERE FOR YOU EVERY STEP OF YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD

On behalf of the Diocese of Joliet, the DisABILITY Ministry welcomes people of ALL ABILITIES and we aim to accompany you on your walk with the Lord, through the unique crosses we carry, with the help of the Sacraments and together with the community that Christ has given to us through His Church.



Disabilities Ministry Promo Video, 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCHBaHQ3Nws>

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CLASSES ARE IN SESSION FOR REACH AND SPRED!

Churches across the Diocese welcome students with
disABILITIES to class as we kickoff the new Faith
Formation year!



ST. RAFAEL,
NAPERVILLE
REACH



ST. MARY,
MOKENA
SPRED



OUR LADY
OF MERCY,
AURORA
REACH



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HIGHLIGHTS AROUND THE DIOCESE



**St. Anne SPICE
(Special People
Included in Catholic
Environments) in
Oswego, IL ended
summer together
with Mass, pizza,
bowling and Bible
Trivia!**

**Our Lady of Mercy
in Aurora, IL**
celebrated the
Exhaltation of the
Cross with
breakfast and
praying the
outdoor Stations of
the Cross as a
REACH community!



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**DisABILITY
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**St. Mary
Immaculate,
Plainfield, IL**
Special Needs
Ministry joined
together for
fellowship after
their monthly
“Sensory-Friendly”
Mass to play games!

MONTHLY SENSORY-FRIENDLY MASS

ST. MARY IMMACULATE PARISH

PLAINFIELD, IL

NOVEMBER 9, 2025

AT 10:30AM

IN CANA HALL

HOLIDAY BINGO & FELLOWSHIP

FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER MASS



QUESTIONS? CONTACT BMELZACKI@SMIP.ORG

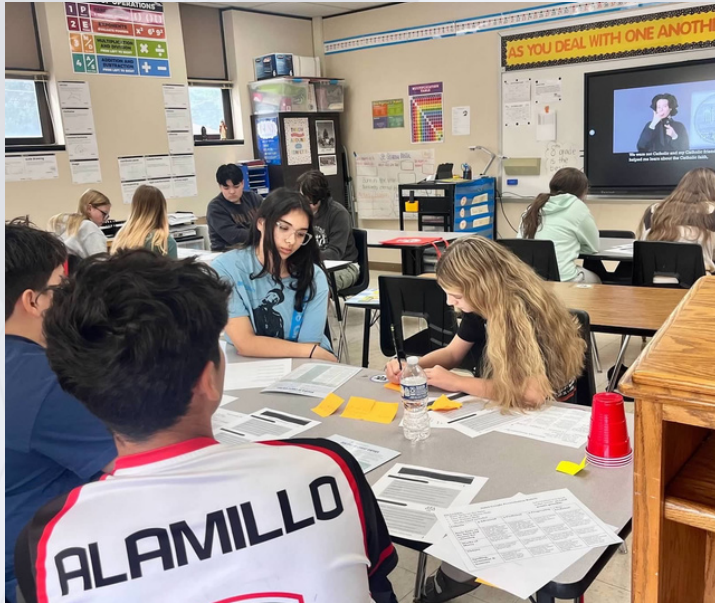
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DisABILITY Ministry

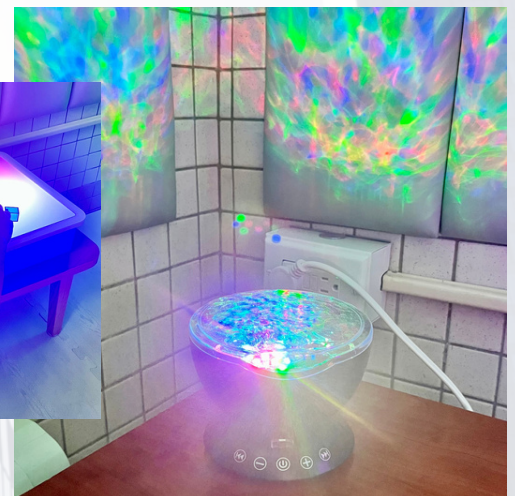
HIGHLIGHTS AROUND THE DIOCESE



The Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet, IL is at work raising awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities by sharing NCPD's ASL Saints videos during Religious Education classes this fall!

A NEW "Calming Corner" at The Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet, IL

A new space thoughtfully designed for anyone who needs a set-aside area to reset. This space is especially useful for those in our community whose senses can be overstimulated by lights, sounds and changes in their environment, particularly during the Mass.



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NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP ON DISABILITIES (NCPD), ELIZABETH POTTS PRESENTS



**Over 140 priests from the
Diocese of Joliet gathered for
Convocation as they listened
to speakers, including
Elizabeth Potts from National
Catholic Partnership on
Disabilities.**

**Over 40 local DREs and program
coordinators gathered to learn
about “barriers” that prevent
the full inclusion of persons with
disabilities in our parishes and
how to lift those barriers in
order to better welcome and
catechize people of ALL ABILITIES
in our Church.**



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DisABILITY Ministry
CHECK OUT THESE HAPPENINGS IN YOUR COMMUNITIES

Let's Make a
Difference Together!

**SAVE THE
DATES**



Two Amazing Fundraisers Supporting Little Friends!



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CHECK OUT THESE HAPPENINGS IN YOUR COMMUNITIES

DisABILITY Ministry



LITTLE FRIENDS
CONNECTING ADULTS WITH COMMUNITIES

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PROGRAM!

Find out how we are helping to create a confident neurodiverse workforce through experiential learning.
Attend an informational session:

 **Thursdays at 5 pm - 9/24, 10/22, 11/12, 12/10**

 **Little Friends Adult Services**
27545 Diehl Road, Warrenville

 **Contact Cassidy Kaput**
ckaput@lilfriends.com or 630.929.2725

www.littlefriendsinc.org

BUDDY UP TENNIS®

A program by Buddy Up for Life, Inc.

NAPERVILLE ILLINOIS

Buddy Up Tennis is a 90-minute tennis and fitness program specifically created for individuals with Down syndrome, our Athletes. Buddy volunteers are partnered with Athletes to provide support, reinforce instruction, and develop friendships.

No tennis experience required. Team t-shirt provided

SESSION DATES	Fall Session: Sept. 20, 27 Oct. 4, 11, 18 Nov. 1, 8, 15
CLINIC TIMES	Saturdays 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM
LOCATION	Five Star Tennis Center 11959 Normantown Rd. Plainfield, IL 60585
ATHLETE COST	\$155 8-Week Session
BUDDY BOOT CAMP	Required volunteer training: Saturday, September 20 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM
PROGRAM BREAKDOWN	30-minutes: Fitness conditioning 60-minutes: Professional tennis instruction



ATHLETES (AGES 5+)

- Improve hand-eye coordination, motor planning, and balance
- Have fun and make new friends
- Learn a new sport and become part of a team
- Create a healthy lifestyle

BUDDIES (AGES 14+)

- Give back to the community
- Have fun and make new friends
- Strengthen your resume
- Earn service hours

BECOME AN ATHLETE

Are you already registered as an Athlete?

YES: Sign up and pay for the session by visiting buddyupforlife.org/shop

NO: Register to become an Athlete by visiting buddyupforlife.org/become-an-athlete

START HERE



BECOME A BUDDY VOLUNTEER

Are you already registered as a Buddy?

YES: Contact your local Coordinator for the Sign-Up/Service link

NO: Register to become a Buddy by visiting buddyupforlife.org/become-a-buddy

PROUDLY PARTNERED WITH:  **Five star tennis center**

To learn more or for questions, please contact NapervilleTennis@bupforlife.org

 **THE CHAMPION of TREES**

ILLUMINATION

TREE LIGHTS AT THE MORTON ARBORETUM

Sensory Friendly Night

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Enjoy a 1-mile paved and accessible path highlighting the beauty of trees in winter. The sensory-sensitive environment features static lights, music at a lower volume, and a limited capacity.

Scan to reserve tickets 

Scan to view the social narrative 

For questions about accessibility, please contact Visitor Services at 630-968-0074 or trees@mortonarb.org.

To purchase tickets, call 630-725-2066 or email tickets@mortonarb.org.

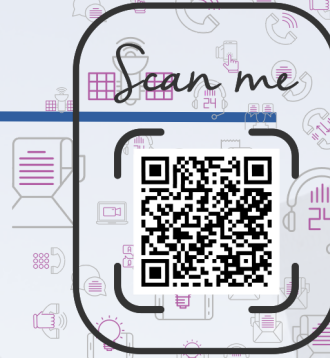


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**Stay Connected with
Resources in Your Local
Community**



Religious Education/Sacramental Preparation Programs for Persons with Disabilities in the Diocese of Joliet							
Parish	Program	Age	Meeting Date	Meeting Time	Frequency	Sacramental Prep	Contact
Notre Dame Parish 64 Norfolk Ave. Clarendon Hills, IL (630) 654-3365	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	K-6	Sunday	10:55 a.m.- 12:05 p.m.	Weekly; see schedule here		Debbie Macaluso dmacaluso@notredameparish.org (630) 601-1762 Mary Baker mbaker@notredameparish.org (630) 601-1757
St. Anne Parish 551 Boulder Hill Pass P.O. Box 670 Oswego, IL 60543 Phone(630) 554-1425	SPICE - Special People Included in Catholic Environments	K-8	Saturday		Weekly	First Communion and Confirmation	Cathy Gilooly reo@stanneparish.org (630) 554-1425
	SPICE for Teens	Junior High (up to 18)	Saturday	3-4:30 p.m. Parents meet at the same time	Monthly	First Communion and Confirmation	Jenine Boes Phone (630) 554-2502 Cell (630) 551-4862 T.j.boes@att.net
St. Raphael Parish 1215 Modaff Rd. Naperville, IL 60540 Phone(630) 355-4545	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	6+	Saturday	9:30-11 a.m.	Twice a month	First Communion and Confirmation	Jeanne McDonald jmcDonald@st-raphael.com (630) 615-7614 Registration
	FUN Group	18 years and up	Saturday	9:30-11 a.m.	Twice a month		
Cathedral of St. Raymond 604 N. Raynor Avenue Joliet, IL 60435 Phone (815) 722-6653	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	K-8	Mondays	4:45-6 p.m.	Twice a month	First Communion and Confirmation	Madonna Wojtaszek-Healy madonnawoj@gmail.com Catechists: Peggy O'Brien, Sandra Campbell
St. Mary Parish 19515 115th Ave. Mokena, IL 60448 Phone (708) 326-9356	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	K-8	Sundays Wednesdays	9:30-10:30 a.m. 4:30-5:30 p.m.	Bi-monthly	First Communion and Confirmation	Tami Brongiel tbrongiel@stmarymokena.org
St. Mary Immaculate Parish 15629 South Route 59 Plainfield, IL	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	Grades 1-8	Monday and Thursday	Monday 6:30- 7:15 p.m. (Grades 7/8) Thursday 5-5:45 p.m. (Grades 1-6)	Weekly	First Communion and Confirmation	Bridget Melzacki Patti Adams 815-436-4501
Sts. Peter and Paul 36 N. Ellsworth Street Naperville, IL 60540 Phone (630) 355-1081	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	K-8				First Communion and Confirmation	Theresa Pratt tpratt@sspeterandpaul.net (630) 357-2436
Our Lady of Mercy Church 701 S. Eola Road, Aurora, IL 60504 Phone 630-851-3444	REACH - Religious Education Apostolate for Christian Handicapped	K-6; 7 Years and older for Sacramental Prep	Sunday	8:30-9:45AM	Bi-Monthly (See Schedule Here)	First Reconciliation, First Communion & Confirmation	Lydia Schmitt, lydias@olmercy.com 630-851-3444 EXT 235
Visitation Parish 779 S. York Street Elmhurst, IL 60126 Phone(630) 279-7058, ext. 502	SPRED (Special Religious Education Development)	Ages 13-40	Monday Evenings	6:30-8 p.m.	Three times a month (September to April)		Melanie Schneider Melanie.Schneider@visitationcc.org (630) 209-0064