



# VIRTUAL SPRING BENEFIT



## CATHOLIC COALITION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

MEDIA ADVISORY: March 12, 2021

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### **2021 Virtual Spring Benefit – Making IT\* Happen Awards to 4 Area Teachers (*\*Inclusive Teaching*) CCSE Helps Catholic Schools and Teachers Say YES**

(Kensington, Maryland) – The Catholic Coalition for Special Education’s (CCSE) annual spring benefit is going virtual this Saturday for a fast-paced 45 minutes featuring students, auction items and awards, and will be emceed by radio/TV personality Tommy McFly.

CCSE’s spring benefit is its largest fundraiser of the year which enables CCSE to provide technical assistance (TA), professional development, coaching, training and grants to area Catholic schools expanding their capacity to create or expand inclusive education programs.

Bishop William Byrne of Springfield Massachusetts recorded a series of remarks to air during the evening along with a video promo. Bishop Byrne originally was scheduled to serve as emcee until his Episcopal ordination last fall. “The progress that has been made in our schools is thanks to” CCSE, said Byrne in one clip.

CCSE’s 2021 Virtual Spring Benefit  
Saturday, March 13, 2021 7:00 – 7:45 pm  
(Pre-Show slides beginning at 6:30 pm)  
Free of Charge

Register at: <https://ccse.ejoinme.org/2021CCSEBenefitHome>

Streaming Live on Facebook: @ccsemaryland

New this year, CCSE is introducing its Making IT\* Happen Awards (*\*Inclusive Teaching*) honoring an exceptional group of regular classroom teachers. These individuals passionately believe in every student’s right to be an integral part of their class. These teachers believe it is their responsibility to help all children reach their potential and share their unique gifts with their classmates.

We honor these general educators who live inclusion in their classrooms and schools every single day because it is through them that the culture of the school changes and becomes truly inclusive, beautifully illustrating the richness of the Body of Christ. The Making IT\* Happen Awards (*\*Inclusive Teaching*).

**Christine Green** currently is the assistant principal and the 5th grade homeroom teacher at Our Lady of Mercy School in Potomac, Maryland where she teaches language arts, math and also Leadership Seminar for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Ms. Green enjoys developing programs based on current best practices and works

collaboratively with colleagues and parents to create plans supporting students so they can thrive and embrace their gifts and talents.

**Alison Interlandi** previously taught 3rd grade at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Bethesda before moving closer to her home in Annapolis, where she currently teaches 4th grade. Ms. Interlandi is a firm believer that every student benefits from learning in an inclusive environment, and that disability does not define who you are: it just makes you “you!”

**David Long** is the assistant principal at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Bethesda, where he has served for 23 years, previously teaching PE, religion, middle school math and more. Mr. Long has never thought of inclusion as anything extra or out of the ordinary, believing that Catholic school teachers are called to “teach as Christ did” while working to ensure that the doors at Lourdes are open every day to any family that wants a Catholic education for their child.

**Donna Reese** has taught dance at The Academy of the Holy Cross for 18 years and is a strong proponent of inclusive teaching. Ms. Reese excels at ensuring that students of all abilities are not only fully included in her studio classroom, but also can shine ‘under the lights.’ Through her passion, every Holy Cross dance recital becomes a visible celebration of the unique talents and gifts present in the school’s community.

CCSE has worked since 2004 to help families and students with disabilities access a Catholic education. “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,” said Francesca Pellegrino, Founder and President of CCSE.

“And there remains much work to do. Most of the students served to date by CCSE have been in primary or middle school. **They are ready to head to high school.** CCSE hopes that our work will pave the way for more Catholic high schools to open their doors to students with disabilities thereby helping to shorten the long line of students and families who are seeking a Catholic high school to call home,” said Pellegrino.

CCSE has awarded grant monies to 31 Catholic schools in nine Maryland counties totaling \$1,100,000. CCSE has directly impacted over 9,000 students, teachers and families.

CCSE supports Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington and Archdiocese of Baltimore by providing seed grants to expand or create sustainable programs enrolling two or more students with disabilities. Funding may be used 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.

*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.*