

September 29, 2008

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CATHOLIC COALITION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AWARDS \$102,000**  
*Believe in Me Campaign Reaches Greater Number of  
Children with Developmental and Low-Incidence Disabilities Served in Catholic Schools*

The Catholic Coalition for Special Education, Inc. (CCSE), in its third funding cycle, increased its grant-making program by 20 percent from 2007, reaching a total of \$102,000 in awards for 2008.

“We are humbled by the outpouring of support so generously given to CCSE’s Believe in Me campaign,” said Francesca Pellegrino, founder and president of CCSE. “And, we are honored that these funds are contributing to the inclusion of more children with disabilities in our Catholic schools.” CCSE provides financial and technical support to Catholic schools who believe that children with disabilities should have equal access to a Catholic education as their peers who do not have disabilities.

At the traditional signing ceremony, held at St. John the Evangelist School in Silver Spring, MD, four schools received financial support to both continue and enhance their high-quality programs that meet the needs of students with developmental or low incidence disabilities:

\* James Pavlacka, Principal of **St. Mary of the Mills School** in Laurel, Md., accepted one of the grants. St. Mary’s funds will hire two full-time paraprofessionals who will serve students with low-incidence disabilities. Maggie Hubbard, assistant principal and special educator also represented the school.

\* Monsignor John Pennington, Pastor of **St. John the Evangelist School** in Silver Spring, Md., accepted a grant to fund the salary of two part-time special education aides for students with low-incidence disabilities and to supplement the Resource Teacher’s salary. Sister Kathleen Lannak, I.H.M., principal and teachers Claire North and Kelly Burgess also represented the school at the signing ceremony.

\*Brother James Kelly, president of **Mount Saint Joseph High School in Baltimore**, accepted a challenge grant for the St. Giles “Come, sit by me” program to expand the school’s services to young men with developmental disabilities. Cheryl Hall, special education coordinator, also represented the school.

\*CCSE’s fourth grant was awarded to **Our Lady of Lourdes School in Bethesda**. The funds will be used to help pay the salary for one special education teacher serving students with developmental disabilities and other special learning needs. Mrs. Patricia McGann, principal, and Joan Friel, special education teacher, represented the school.

Hall, in an emotional speech, told those gathered that there is a “whole new future ahead of us.” She pointed out one of her students, Ben, who came to the highly academic Mount Saint Joseph’s from St. Mary of the Mills School – “a real success story because he had 12 years of being included.”

Hubbard described the loneliness of advocating for the rights of children with special needs in this era of accountability and high achievement. “CCSE makes it not so lonely,” she said.

According to Pellegrino, Catholic schools are willing to enroll students with disabilities, but lack the financial and professional resources to ensure success. Schools need financial resources to help with staffing costs, to purchase specialized classroom equipment and materials. Evidence of this need can be found in the increasing number of *Requests for Funding Applications* (RFA) CCSE receives as illustrated in the chart below:

<i>School Year</i>	<i>Funding requests</i>	<i>Grants awarded</i>
2008-2009*	\$354,429.00	\$101,500.00
2007-2008	\$257,101.00	\$83,500.00
2006-2007	\$109,218.00	\$64,218.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$720,748.00</b>	<b>\$249,218.00</b>

“CCSE’s devotion to students with developmental disabilities is so appreciated by our Catholic community,” said Mrs. Sandra Andreas McMurtrie, a companion for Mother Theresa for many years and who also chaired CCSE’s 2008 spring fundraiser.

“How can we afford not to do this,” said McGann, principal of Our Lady of Lourdes, one of this year’s grant recipients. “We are a Catholic school.”

CCSE is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 independent, non-profit organization established in 2004 to advance, support and promote the implementation of special education services in Catholic schools in Maryland and Washington, DC by awarding grants and providing technical assistance to Catholic schools.

To advance its mission CCSE relies on donations from individuals and local businesses, as well as pro-bono services. To make a donation, to volunteer or for more information, please visit the CCSE website [www.ccse-maryland.org](http://www.ccse-maryland.org). or contact them at [info@ccse-maryland.org](mailto:info@ccse-maryland.org)

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