

Pathways.org Announces Annual Open Hearts Awards Grants

CHICAGO (October 8, 2017) — The Inclusion In Worship Ministry of Pathways.org, a Chicago based not-for-profit, is recognizing eight houses of faith, one religious school and one agency with cash grants to support their efforts to welcome individuals of all abilities.

2017 Open Hearts Awards Winners

St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Minneapolis, MN

St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL

Mother Seton Catholic Church, Germantown, MD

Regina Dominican High School, Wilmette, IL

Mustard Seed Project, Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education, Loyola University

Mishkan Chicago, Chicago, IL

Beth Emet The Free Synagogue, Evanston, IL

Temple Sholom of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Melrose B'Nai Israel Emanu-El, Elkins Park, PA

Temple Beth El, Northbrook, IL

Christian Learning Center Network, Wyoming, MI

For additional information about the Open Hearts Award grants and for application forms visit www.InclusionInWorship.org.

2017 Open Hearts Awards Projects

St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Minneapolis, MN

St. Albert the Great Catholic Church works to be alert to parishioner needs and tries to meet them. The parish has an 11 passenger, accessible, mini-bus with lift for parishioners who use walkers and wheelchairs. Volunteer drivers transport senior parishioners and those with mobility issues to and from weekend liturgies. The

BeFriender Ministry engages parishioners in St. Albert the Great's pastoral care — and significantly expands its outreach. BeFrienders receive 10 hours of training in ministering to the emotional and spiritual needs of individuals by being a caring and listening presence. BeFriender ministers reach out to individuals whose illness, frailty or other circumstances greatly restrict their interaction with others in their community.

The parish has applied for and received four Pathways.org Inclusion In Worship grants. In 2009 the grant allowed them to supply hearing devices for the worship space, in 2011 the grant was used to make access improvements in the washroom in the church vestibule and in 2016 the washroom in the meeting house was improved for greater accessibility.

This year the parish will use their \$1,000 grant to replace a fifteen year old deteriorating ramp to their office building.

“We are grateful to be recipients of two previous grants from Inclusion in Worship. In 2009 we were able to supply hearing devices for our worship space and in 2011 we were able to make access improvements in the washroom in the church vestibule. Pathways.org Inclusion in Worship is a shining beacon for inclusion, awareness and welcome,” stated Robin Henry, Open Hearts Award applicant.

St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL

St. Catherine Laboure parish has a long history of making it possible for parishioners with disabilities to participate in parish life. The pastor, Father Mania Waithaka, appointed a parish Inclusion Representative, Janice Seipp, in 2010 and he has consulted with her over the years to improve the parish facilities for accessibility. New doors with low thresholds to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers, automatic door openers, removable hand rails to the altar and a family restroom modified for accessibility are some of the projects the parish has completed.

The parish keeps access and inclusion in the forefront of parish life by celebrating Inclusion Awareness day every year. Preaching, prayer cards, teaching in the RE



St. Albert the Great parish will use their 2017 Open Hearts Award grant to help fund a new ramp to the church office building.

program and school classrooms, student artwork depicting inclusion and special activities all focus on welcoming the gifts of all parishioners.

Recently, the parish made a special effort to include parishioners who are deaf by providing sign language interpretation for the installation of their new Marian Shrine and for a series of Marian lectures.

With their 2017 Open Hearts Award grant the parish will purchase five additional assistive listening devices for their sound system to allow more parishioners to hear easily in church.

Mother Seton Catholic Church, Germantown, MD

Mother Seton parish started an Adaptive Needs Faith Formation program in the fall of 2016. The program is tailored to each individual student's needs and abilities. Some of the students find sustained activities challenging so the program director wanted to provide quality sensory materials for breaks for these students. Religious themed puzzles and games, thera - putty, kinetic sand, scooters and balls are some of the items that will be purchase with their Open Hearts Award grant.



Three students from the Adaptive Needs Faith Formation program at Mother Seton parish were confirmed this past year.

“We are so proud of all our student’s accomplishments this past year. We had 3 students receive Confirmation, 5 students receive First Eucharist and 4 students receive First Reconciliation. These are sacramental blessings their parents felt were unavailable to their children in the past,” said Mary Beth DeLuzio, parish nurse and religious education coordinator.

Regina Dominican High School, Wilmette, IL

A partnership with the Loyola University Andrew Greeley Center for Catholic Education *All Are Welcome* project inspired Regina Dominican High School to reach out to students with identified learning differences. The school created the

Caritas program for student seeing academic assistance. A resource teacher helps *Caritas* students with organizational skills, executive functioning skills and ways to learn more effectively given their individual learning styles.

The school applied for a 2017 Open Hearts Award grant to purchase diagnostic tests, academic planners, countdown timers and executive functioning workbooks for the *Caritas* program.

“Enrollment in the *Caritas* program for diverse learners has doubled in the past two years.

Academic support is provided in all areas of the curriculum, including theology. For many of our students with learning differences, the *Caritas* program has made matriculation at our private, Catholic institution a viable alternative to public education," said Dr. Patricia Caine, Director of Student Services.

Regina Dominican High School was built with accessible entrances and an elevator. Most recently a ramp was constructed to make the orchestra pit accessible.

Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education at Loyola University Mustard Seed Project, Chicago, IL

The annual Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education Mustard Seed Project Conference considers the important question of serving students with disabilities in Catholic schools. Drawing on the experience of Catholic school professionals and clinicians, this conference highlights promising practices and provides practical lessons on inclusive practices in Catholic schools.

The 2017 Mustard Seed Project Conference concluded with a half day working session addressing important issues related to Catholic school inclusion. Through an Ignatian Roundtable Experience, participants considered three questions:

- *What are the strategies we can use to help change the mindsets of various stakeholders about serving students with disabilities?*
- *Where are the opportunities and conditions to increase collaboration between schools and dioceses?*



Regina Dominican High School will use their Open Hearts Award grant to support students with special learning needs in inclusive classrooms.

- *How can we leverage resources (financial, human and other resources) to increase opportunities for students with disabilities in Catholic Schools?*

The Pathways.org 2017 Open Hearts Award grant will be used to document the collective wisdom from these conversations into a digital and print report that will be used to inform future work, promote inclusive practices in Catholic Schools and extend the reach of the Mustard Seed Project Conference to a wider audience.

Beth Emet The Free Synagogue, Evanston, IL

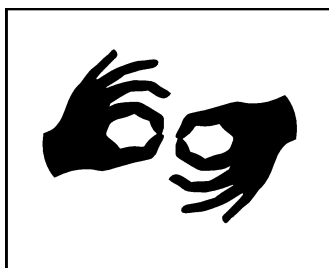
Beth Emet The Free Synagogue has worked on both physical as well as attitudinal barriers to including people of differing abilities in synagogue life. Students with special needs are integrated into their religious education program with the support of a learning specialist. Plans are in place to improve the entrance and sanctuary to accommodate members with physical disabilities.



Wheelchairs and walkers are available for congregants' use at Beth Emet The Free Synagogue.

The synagogue applied for a 2017 Open Hearts Award grant to help fund an automatic door opener on the synagogue washroom. "Installation of the automatic door opener will allow so many more to easily access the bathroom which already has an ADA sink, toilet and grab bars," said Bekki Harris Kaplan, Executive Director, Beth Emet The Free Synagogue.

Mishkan Chicago, Chicago, IL



Mishkan Chicago will create a fund for sign language interpreters for High Holiday services.

Over 1700 guests, grandparents, friends or people who just need a home for the High Holidays worship at Mishkan Chicago on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the most holy and joyful holidays on the Jewish calendar. Members of the congregation want to provide accommodations for the High Holidays for people in the Jewish community who are deaf. The 2017 Open Hearts Award grant will be used to help defray the cost of *hiring to sign language* interpreters for High Holiday services next year.

“One of Mishkan’s core values is radical accessibility. We will always do our best to accommodate unique needs, whether for disabilities, allergies, or other individual circumstances to make participation at Mishkan more accessible to all,” said Rachel Court, Managing Director.

Temple Sholom of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Accessibility and inclusivity have become key priorities at Temple Sholom of Chicago. Celebrating its 150 anniversary this year, the congregation wanted to eliminate physical barriers to participation. A new accessible bimah and a ramp to the sanctuary have been designed and construction is underway. “The exciting new bimah re-design is intended to provide a whole new level of participation that will benefit every one of all ages and abilities,” said Marla Krupman, Director of Development at Temple Sholom.

The 2017 Open Hearts Award grant will be used to financially support this project.

Melrose B’Nai Israel Emanu-El, Elkins Park, PA

Melrose B’nai Israel Emanu-El is known as “the little shul with a big heart.” Celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the congregation moved to ground level, accessible facilities six years ago in order to better welcome people with mobility needs. The inclusion committee at Melrose B’nai Israel Emanu-El Synagogue enhances a warm welcoming environment that affirms the dignity of all congregants and guests. They have seen that gluten-free and sugar-free choices are provided at Kiddush and events where food is served. Large print prayer books, flexible seating and accessible parking spaces near the main entrance are also available at the synagogue. An accessibility evaluation by nearby Center for Independent Living resulted in plans to obtain a portable, wheelchair accessible Torah Table to be used by everyone in the congregation. A plan to create an accessible bathroom by reconfiguring existing space is also underway as a result of the independent evaluation.



Melrose B'nai Israel Emanu-El will use their 2017 Open Hearts Award grant to purchase assistive listening devices

In order to determine the needs of their congregants, the inclusion committee surveyed members and found that many could not fully participate in services and activities because of difficulty hearing.

The congregation has installed a new sound system and will use their Open Hearts Award grant to purchase assistive listening devices for members who need this individual technical support to hear.

"We at Melrose B'nai Israel Emanu-El are grateful for the opportunity that the Pathways.Org Open Hearts Awards grant has provided for us as we move forward with our work," said Fran Sion, co-chair of the temple's inclusion committee.

Temple Beth-El, Northbrook, IL

Temple Beth-El has made great strides in welcoming and including individuals of all abilities in worship, education, fellowship and leadership. A few examples of the ways the congregation has become inclusive and welcoming are:

- A lift to the bimah in the main sanctuary,
- Additional, lower mezuzah by the entrances so everyone can reach them
- a ramp to the bimah in the small chapel
- clergy no longer ask the congregation to "rise" but instead the assembly is asked to "prepare" for prayer
- speakers, such as Sen. Tammy Duckworth, have spoken to the congregation to educate and inspire



Additional, lower mezuzah by the entrances accommodate members who use wheelchairs at Temple Beth-El.

Temple Beth-El applied for a 2017 Open Hearts Award grant to offset the cost of a \$15,000 renovation to their existing sound system and to hire a sign language interpreter for Shabbat services and next year's High Holiday services. The goal is to improve the prayer experience for people with hearing loss while exposing the entire community to sign language interpretation.

"Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Open Hearts Awards grant and giving us and others the opportunity to be more inclusive worshipping communities," said Janice Hadesman, Executive Director.

CLC Network, Wyoming, MI



The CLC Network will use their Open Hearts Award grant to create a video for church leaders about the challenges faced by a young woman with Lyme disease as she looks for an accessible church.

The CLC Network (also known as the Christian Learning Center) partners with faith-based communities around the country, helping them to support persons of any ability with full inclusion at school and church. CLC Network draws on more than thirty-five years' experience in special education to serve as consultants, trainers, and educational psychologists for partner schools and churches.

The CLC Network applied for an Open Hearts Award grant to create a video that will demonstrate to church leaders the lived experience that people with disabilities encounter and consider when entering a new place of worship. By seeing a church in the eyes of Tory, a woman who lives with Lyme disease,

congregations will be provided with positive tips and tools to help them include persons with varying abilities. The video will be used to inspire church leaders to positive action and will direct viewers to a number of resources and next steps in their efforts to welcome persons at all levels of ability.

About the Open Hearts Awards

The Open Hearts Awards recognize houses of faith and religious schools across the U.S, for their efforts to welcome individuals of all abilities and helps fund access and inclusion projects with grants of up to \$1,000. Applications for the Open Hearts Awards and Junior Open Hearts Awards (nominated by children, ages 5-18) are accepted annually. **Deadline for applications is August 1.**

To be eligible for an Open Hearts Award, congregations must submit a completed application form, a video or essay with electronic photos describing the congregation's inclusion efforts and a request for funding for a specific project with costs. Awards are announced the second weekend in October in conjunction with the kick off of congregation's fall Inclusion Awareness Day celebrations.

Since 1997, Inclusion In Worship has recognized more than 200 congregations with grants totaling over \$160,000. For more information and application forms visit www.InclusionInWorship.org, call 1-800-955-2445, or email info@InclusionInWorship.org.

About Inclusion Awareness Day

Inclusion In Worship invites congregations to celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day in their house of faith. Inclusion Awareness Days kickoff annually on the second Sunday in October and continue throughout the fall on dates convenient for congregations. On Inclusion Awareness Day houses of faith take stock of their current access and inclusion efforts and renew their commitments to welcoming worshippers of all abilities as active participants. Visit www.InclusionInWorship.org for interfaith Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks.

About Inclusion In Worship

Inclusion In Worship is a ministry of Pathways.org, a Chicago based not for profit organization. The interfaith Inclusion In Worship ministry provides grants, videos and educational materials to help congregations welcome worshippers of all abilities. Visit www.InclusionInWorship.org for more information.

About Pathways.org

Pathways.org is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to empowering parents and health professionals with FREE tools and resources to maximize a child's motor, sensory, and communication development. Pathways.org educational materials are shared freely on our website www.Pathways.org. In addition, Pathways.org's state-of-the-art pediatric therapy clinic in Glenview, IL offers best practices in physical, occupational, and speech therapy services. Pathways.org also promotes inclusion in houses of worship with the Inclusion In Worship ministry as well as inclusion in other areas of the community.

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