

Faith Based Resources for Families with Special Needs

(last edited 7/27/22)

Saint Bernadette Parish Resources

Cut Out Pews

Our parish has cut out pews to provide space for wheelchairs for those with mobility concerns. An usher can help direct you to these locations throughout the church.

Sensory Room

Our Sensory Room accommodates people needing a smaller, more confined environment. The room is accessed through the front entrance of the church and includes rocking chairs and manipulative objects on the walls to assist in engaging hands while focusing on listening. The speaker volume can be adjusted. The room was designed by Drew Newberry, a young parishioner with autism as an Eagle Scout project.

9am Saturday Mass

This Mass is attended by members of the God's Family Program. The atmosphere is especially welcoming to those with special needs. This Mass is shorter, has less people in attendance and no music. This does meet your Sunday obligation if this best meets the needs of your family member with special needs.

God's Family: Faith Formation Program

God's Family is an intergenerational program for people of all ages with disabilities and their families. Gatherings are held monthly on the second Saturday from 9 am to 11 am beginning with attendance at Mass. Contact Sharon at 648-1720 ext. 3 or sharonu@saintbopny.org.

Inclusive Christmas and Easter Mass

These Masses are shorter, less crowded, have dimmer lighting and softer music. All communications are a gift from God, so expressions of glory are welcome in sounds, gestures and movement. Masses are interpreted in sign language. Check the Parish calendar for scheduling.

HopeKeepers

HopeKeepers is an adult Christian support group for those dealing with chronic illness and/or pain. The group meets monthly on Saturdays. For more information, contact Laura Seil Ruszczuk at 435-1768 or lsruszczuk@gmail.com.

Open Doors Ministry

Open Doors Ministry meets monthly on the first Friday of the month on Zoom. Our mission is to Open Doors to accessibility, Open Minds through awareness and Open Hearts through active participation in the life of the church. We welcome any person with disabilities, family members, caregivers and interested parishioners to join our ministry by contacting Paula Potteiger at 716-649-1051 or at cozmo3631@gmail.com Anyone interested in serving in liturgical ministries such as lector, altar server or greeter, contact Sharon Urbaniak at 716-648-1720 ext. 3.

Local Faith Based Resources

The Buffalo Catholic Deaf Apostolate

The Buffalo Catholic Deaf Apostolate is located at Fourteen Holy Helpers Parish, 1345 Indian Church Road, West Seneca. The 10:30 am Mass is interpreted. If a deaf person needs an interpreter for a wedding or funeral, please call Sister Conchetta LoPresti OSF at 716-601-8887 to arrange for an interpreter.

Catholic Charities Guild for the Blind

The Guild provides spiritual and social opportunities/events for approximately 130 persons who are totally or legally blind. There are approximately 50 volunteers active in supplying transportation and other services. The services of this organization are unique in the Diocese. For more information or to get involved, call (716) 218-1400 x2003.

Victorious Missionaries

Victorious Missionaries is a national organization consisting of physically, mentally, and emotionally disabled persons and their caregivers. The group gives spiritual and social enlightenment to its members. The local chapter meets monthly on the first Saturday of the month from 11 am to 1 pm at Fourteen Holy Helpers Parish Hall at 1345 Indian Church Road in West Seneca. For more information, call Carol Buchla at 649-7542

National Faith Based Resources

Be Not Afraid <https://benotafraid.net/> provides peer-based support to parents experiencing a prenatal diagnosis and carrying to term, helping families either before or after they find out their child may have health issues or special needs

Catholic Mom

Holy Cross Family Ministries is the parent organization of CatholicMom. The following books are listed on www.catholicmom.com

Faith, Family, and Children with Special Needs: How Catholic Parents and Their Kids with Special Needs Can Develop a Richer Spiritual Life, by David Rizzo (Loyola Press, 2012)

A Special Mother is Born, by Leticia Velasquez (WestBow Press, 2011)

Loyola Press <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/parish-ministry/special-needs/> This page includes resource links for catechists, teachers, parents and families including an article “ How to Celebrate Mass with a Child with Special Needs”

The Catholic Special Needs Families of America

The Catholic Special Needs Families of America has been created to connect and support special needs families in our community through monthly Zoom gatherings. We are families who worship and celebrate together and invite all to join us! Please message Tobi at stewart626@me.com to get access to resources and special events

The National Catholic Partnership on Disability <https://ncpd.org/>

Rooted in Gospel values that affirm the dignity of every person, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) works collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society. This extensive website has sections devoted to intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, deafness and hearing loss, physical disabilities, blindness and vision loss, and mental illness.

Religious Signs for Families <https://deafcatholicphilly.org/religious-sign-app> Religious Signs for Families is an app from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to learn ASL using religious words. This app helps families with young Deaf children and deaf couples with young children foster prayer in the home, providing a way for families to bond to one another and God as they pray in ASL.

The Xavier Society for the Blind www.xaviersocietyfortheblind.org

The mission statement of the Xavier Society to the Blind is: To provide the Word of God, Roman Catholic teaching and literature, spiritual and inspirational material to blind or visually impaired persons of any faith in whatever format best meets their needs at no charge. To offer volunteer service opportunities through donation of time, talent or financial support.

WNY Community Supports For Families with Special Needs

DDAWNY www.ddawny.org

The Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York is a collaborative group of member voluntary agencies that provide services to people with developmental disabilities. While honoring individual agency missions, it is the intent of the Alliance to assist agencies to develop relationships, promote unified strategies and share risks for the mutual gain with and for the benefit of people with developmental disabilities.

Down Syndrome Parents Group of WNY 547 Englewood Avenue Buffalo, NY 14223 716–832–9334 <https://dspgwny.org>

The DSPG (Down Syndrome Parents Group), works to raise awareness and enhance the lives of people with Down syndrome. Informational and social events provide a broad range of opportunities for families for support and encouragement. The parent support program connects new parents with volunteers who can share their experiences and provide support. A phone call, hospital or home visit is available upon request from Barbara at 716–983–2140

Down Syndrome Program of John R. Oishei Children’s Hospital Floor 2, 1001 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203, 716-323-6410

The Down Syndrome Clinic is a team including: a physician, occupational, physical, and speech therapists and a child psychologist who focuses on behavioral health and wellness. The center provides multidisciplinary and comprehensive evaluations and services from birth to adulthood. Services begin with prenatal support for expecting families. Person and family centered medical, psychological, behavioral developmental, and educational care plans are created using shared decision-making focusing on shared goals, growth, development, strengths and abilities.

Erie County Office for People with Disabilities <https://www3.erie.gov/ecopd/>

The Erie County Office for People with Disabilities ensures that Erie County's citizens with disabilities have a direct voice in County government; to offer an advocate who could work to develop and enhance services; and to oversee facilities and programs by the County.

Erie One Boces <https://www.e1b.org/en/k-12-education-programs/resources-for-parents-and-professionals.aspx>

Erie One Boces provides an extensive list of local, state and National resources for families and individuals with special needs.

Fantastic Friends of WNY www.fantasticfriendswny.org

Fantastic Friends of WNY, Inc. is a non-profit, volunteer social organization for individuals of all ages with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Children and adults have a great time at events, socializing and making friends. Parents are able to enjoy respite or socialize with other parents during events. Events are held at various accessible locations throughout Western New York. Special needs individuals are paired with a 1:1 volunteer "buddy" at events to assist them with socializing and the event's activities. Our center is located at 1284 French Rd, Depew, NY. Activities include martial fitness/arts, arts & crafts, music, dances, games, programs by the D'Youville College Occupational Therapy Department and special events.

Friends of L'Arche of Buffalo and WNY www.larcheusa.org

L'Arche is an international organization promoting a culture of shared lives between people with and without disabilities. Carefully crafted circles of support create relationships that grow in faith and friendship, leading to a sense of authentic belonging. There are over 154 L'Arche communities throughout the world. They create family networks, housing options, social opportunities and creative initiatives through a dedication to service, community, spirituality, and outreach. Each United States community establishes its own 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization reflecting L'Arche values and the unique ethnic, cultural, and religious makeup of their own area. To learn more about creating a L'Arche community in WNY contact Maggie Buckley at 716-796-4037

Gigi's Playhouse 326 Kenmore Ave. Buffalo, NY 14223, 716-322-0010

Gigi's Playhouse is a national nonprofit that offers free programs for families and children with Down syndrome ranging from infancy through adulthood. Programs are in person or remote focusing on recreation, socialization and skill development. Register for speech and literacy classes, fitness, cooking, yoga, dance and art.

Kids Out And About <https://buffalo.kidsoutandabout.com/content/special-needs-resources-and-around-buffalo>

This website provides a guide for kids, teens and families in the Buffalo area. They have gathered a list of special needs resources for families living in the Buffalo area including a master list of organizations upcoming activities, and about summer camps.

Parent Network of WNY- Support. Educate. Connect. Empower. <https://parentnetworkwny.org/>

Parent Network of WNY is a not-for-profit agency that provides education and resources for families of individuals with special needs (birth through adulthood) and for professionals. Parent Network of WNY provides 1-on-1 Support and education through resources, workshops and support groups to assist families of individuals with disabilities to understand their disability and navigate the support service system.

Parent to Parent of New York State www.parenttoparentnys.org

Parent to Parent of New York State builds a supportive network of families to reduce isolation and empower those who care for people with developmental disabilities or special healthcare needs to navigate and influence service systems and make informed decisions. For resources found in Western New York, choose the Western office in the upper right hand drop down menu.

21 Connect <http://21connect.org>

21 Connect is a Buffalo not-for-profit advocacy group focused on educating the community about individuals with Down syndrome, connecting people and sharing stories. Therapists, educators, agencies, medical professionals, parents, families, friends and individuals with Down syndrome are all encouraged to join. Outreach gift baskets with educational materials, toys and supplies are donated to new parents of children with Down syndrome. 21 Connect also has both a support group and social group for families.

National Resources for Families with Special Needs

The Global Down Syndrome Foundation info@globaldownsyndrome.org 3239 E. 2nd Ave., Denver, CO 80206, 303-321-6277

Global Down Syndrome Foundation's goal is to significantly improve the lives of people with Down syndrome through research, medical care, education and advocacy by educating governments, educational organizations and society. They support the Linda Crnic Institute for Down Syndrome, the first academic home committed to research and medical care for people with Down syndrome. Since Down syndrome is the least funded genetic condition in the United States, fundraising and government advocacy is a major goal. Events include the Be Beautiful, Be Yourself fashion show, Dare to Play football camp with Ed McCaffrey, Denver Broncos Cheerleaders Dare to Cheer Camp, and the Global Down Syndrome Foundation Educational Grants.

The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) 1-800-221-4602 info@ndss.org

NDSS envisions a world where all people with Down syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations and become valued members of welcoming communities. They support and advocate by focusing on: resources in support, policy and advocacy, and community engagement. NDSS engages in activities, events and programs and topics critical to our community, federal and state advocacy, public policy, health and wellness, education and employment including the National Buddy Walk Program.

