



"And when they could not bring [the paralyzed man] to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him..." —Mark 2:3-4 (paraphrased)

2011 OPEN ROOF AWARD PRESENTATION

Established in 200, the Open Roof Award recognizes a congregation or district in the Church of the Brethren that has made great strides in its attempt to serve, *as well as be served by*, people with disabilities. This year's recipient, the Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Virginia, Mid-Atlantic District, exemplifies both of these aspects of service. The award was presented during the Mission and Ministry Board Meeting at Annual Conference by Jonathan Shively, Executive Director of Congregational Life Ministries, and Heddie Sumner, a member of the Disabilities Ministry. Grady and Paula Mendenhall received the award on behalf of their congregation.

The broadness with which the Oakton faith community has defined 'disability', recognizing that each of us is less than whole in some way, is exceptional. Following are just a few of their ministries, both within and outside of the church:

- Upon hiring a new secretary with memory issues, the church worked with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services to provide training and basic workplace accommodations. An extensive training manual was developed, with detailed checklists for complicated tasks. Church members are encouraged to follow up by e-mail on all work requests.
- The Oakton church also coordinates with county services to provide volunteer work for disabled persons, including stuffing and folding bulletins each week.
- Mentoring and intervention assistance have been provided on an as-needed basis for persons with various levels of emotional and social disability. This includes tutoring, behavior counseling, assistance with legal issues, and emergency housing during family conflicts.
- Sunday school teachers and attendees have been educated and accommodations have been provided for a student in the faith community with a hearing impairment. Children learn to speak clearly and face-on when interacting with their peer. During storytelling, this student often holds and reads the story picture, and is also given the option of a non-singing area (with others) during music practice.
- A weekday Bible study is held at the home of a parent with a disabled infant since medical issues prevent the parents from coming to church. Church members also provide respite care as needed for medical appointments.



- In an ongoing effort to make the facility and worship more physically accessible, Oakton has added an elevator and ramps, ADA-compliant restrooms, and has created several wheelchair spaces in the sanctuary by shortening pews.
- Large print bulletins, hymnals, and Bibles are available; wireless hearing assistance electronics are provided upon request including a cochlear-implant T-loop.

This is just a sampling of the many ways the Oakton Church of the Brethren has carefully assessed the needs of its congregation and expanded its collective way of thinking to encourage all to serve and be served. In recognition of their clear focus on abilities rather than disabilities, we congratulate them on this much-deserved award!