

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local High Schools Celebrate Inclusion with Connections Banquet
Annual banquet brings students with varying abilities together

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH (February 2014) – CLC Network, a national non-profit promoting the development of people with a variety of abilities and disabilities to live as active, integrated members of their communities, will join with area high schools to host an inclusive dance and banquet on Saturday, March 1, at the Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville, MI. The ticketed event, which is held annually, allows students of varying abilities to enjoy a night of fun.

“This is a memorable evening for individuals with disabilities and their friends,” shared Ellie Van Keulen, inclusion specialist at South Christian High School and founder of the Connections Banquet. “We celebrate everyone’s gifts with games, music, dancing, and plenty of delicious food.”

WHAT: 12th Annual Connections Banquet, featuring *Pop Scholars*, a local improv group.

WHO: Alumni and students from Calvin Christian High School in Grandville, Northpointe Christian High School in Grand Rapids, South Christian High School in Grand Rapids, and Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville.

WHERE: The Pinnacle Center, Hudsonville, MI

WHEN: Saturday, March 1, 2014, at 5:00 PM

The Connections Banquet was founded in 2003, when students from South Christian High School realized persons with special needs had a difficult time finding their place at high school proms. They had an idea for an event where everyone could shine and belong.

“I like to go out to eat and attend a banquet just like my other friends do,” shared Tim Litton, a South Christian alum and an enthusiastic supporter of the banquet. “Let me tell you one thing for sure: I wouldn’t miss this event for any reason.”

Tim isn’t the only one who doesn’t want to miss out. Since its inception, the Connections Banquet has grown from 60 participants from one high school to 240 from four high schools. The upcoming evening will conclude with everyone joining together to sing Michael W. Smith’s “Friends are Friends Forever,” to commemorate an evening of meaningful friendships.

This event is closed to the public.

For interview opportunities and media inquiries concerning CLC Network and the Connections Banquet, please contact Katie Barkley at 616-855-3106 or kbarkley@clcnetwork.org.

About CLC Network:

CLC Network is a national non-profit committed to promoting the development of people with a variety of abilities and disabilities to live as active, integrated members of their communities. The organization partners with families and organizations to more fully understand individuals with disabilities and to build support systems that enable their inclusion in all aspects of life. For more information on CLC Network or a list of available resources, visit www.clcnetwork.org.