**John M. Oakey & Son Funeral Home & Crematory, Salem, Virginia**

This year, John M. Oakey & Son Funeral Home has had the distinct privilege of partnering with Masterpiece Alliance to provide a fun-filled “Night at the Movies” for their organization. Masterpiece Alliance, a faith-based organization founded on Ephesians 2:10, is a community of friends of all ages and abilities who gather together to “laugh, live, love, serve and grow”. Like Masterpiece Alliance, we collectively believe that “having a disability shouldn’t lead to living in society’s margins.” Our firm became connected with Masterpiece Alliance because of one especially treasured member of our staff. Kaitlin Litz joined our staff in 2010 as part of a grant funded job readiness and coaching program for special needs adults. The program is no longer in existence; however, Kaitlin still faithfully maintains both her job at the funeral home and her job at our local high school. Kaitlin is very active in Masterpiece Alliance and asked if we could host a private showing of a documentary produced by Buzz4Good and which later aired on our local Blue Ridge P.B.S. Our funeral home chapel with its large screen and multimedia capabilities was the perfect place to welcome an invitation-only premier party! When our friends saw themselves on the big screen, they couldn’t contain their excitement – nor could we. What is so often a place of solace and mourning was instead a room full of pure, contagious joy! Our staff couldn’t wait to extend another invitation; this time, for a Night at the Movies to show one of Kaitlin’s favorites, Alvin and the Chipmunks. Most of our full-time staff and their families as well as several of our part-time associates came to grill and serve hot dogs and chips, movie theatre candy and of course, popcorn popped in a fragrant, nostalgic popper. We were all in agreement that the best part of the night was the spontaneous dance party that erupted when the movie credits rolled.

Having a child or guardianship of an adult with physical or developmental disability can be an isolating and lonely journey. Masterpiece Alliance serves to provide not only respite for families caring for the vulnerable but also a sense of belonging and inclusion for those often overlooked. Our firm is grateful for our partnership with Masterpiece Alliance and looks forward to many more opportunities to serve and host their organization, perhaps maybe an even bigger dance party!