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# Philanthropy Witness



The Official Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society



## Aid to Greece & Cyprus Committee Launches *Heart to Heart* Campaign

On February 1, National President Maria Logus and Committee Chair Aphrodite Skeadas sent a [letter](#) to all Philoptochos stewards on the Aid to Greece & Cyprus Campaign, the National Philoptochos response to the ongoing crisis in those two countries. Since the launch of this campaign in January 2012, through the love and generosity of Philoptochos chapters, more than \$577,000 has been raised and disbursed.

Newspaper headlines may focus on other difficulties in Europe, but in Greece, poverty is increasing and unemployment is still the highest in Europe. Nearly one in four Greeks is unemployed and receives no benefits. Soup kitchens feed thousands in cities each day. Monies for hospitals, schools and social services have been slashed, leaving increasing numbers of vulnerable populations-- children and senior citizens-- without support.

In their letter, President Logus and Chair Skeadas prayerfully asked all chapters to renew their commitment in the *Heart to Heart* Campaign by commemorating Greek Independence Day (March 25) and OXI Day (October 28) with fundraising events on or around these significant dates which remind us of Greek and Cypriot resolve and perseverance.

Please consider those who are struggling and in need of basic necessities in Greece and Cyprus and participate in the *Heart to Heart* Campaign with your Philoptochos chapters and in your communities in the coming months.

Joining Chair Skeadas on the Aid to Greece & Cyprus Committee are Evangeline Mekras Scurtis (Executive Board Liaison), Elaine Cladis, Vickie Demos, Christina Hiotis, Thea Martin, Anastasia Michals, Helen Psaras, Vicki Scaljon, Eleni Stamboulidis, Maria Stavropoulos, Deana Balahtsis Thomas, and Kalli Tsitsipas. Please reach out to them with any questions you may have concerning this very important initiative.

Click [here](#) to read the letter from President Logus and Chair Skeadas.

Click [here](#) for details on the Aid to Greece & Cyprus Campaign on the Philoptochos website.



## Broadcast Journalist Laura Evans to Emcee CMF Luncheon

The National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund (CMF) Committee is pleased to announce that award-winning journalist, Laura Evans, will be the Emcee for the its Luncheon on Saturday, November 11, 2017. Under the High Patronage of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, and with the spiritual blessings of His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey, the Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos Board is honored to host the event at The Venetian in Garfield, New Jersey.

Ms. Evans spent 18 years at Washington's Fox News affiliate, most recently as the anchor of the 5 p.m. newscast. With her family, she is a member of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Bethesda, Maryland. She and her husband, Greek American Lobbyist Mike Manatos, currently serve as the Chairs for the Make-A-Wish Mid-Atlantic Gala and have offered their time and talents in numerous philanthropic activities and events.

Anastasia Michals, Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos President and Chair of the Children's Medical Fund Luncheon, stated, "We are honored and pleased to welcome a devout Greek Orthodox Christian, philanthropist, and true professional, to the CMF family. She has shown her compassion for all who need support and help, especially children. We know that Laura's contribution to our Luncheon will make this event memorable and will help to raise much-needed funds to help children."

Since its inception, the National Philoptochos has raised approximately \$3.3 million for the Children's Medical Fund and has awarded over \$2.8 million in grants to hospitals and organizations. The remaining funds have been disbursed for children in need through grants handled by the Social Services department at the National Philoptochos office. To donate to the Children's Medical Fund, click [here](#).



## Growing Your Philoptochos Garden of Faith

*Jeannie Ranglas, National Philoptochos First Vice President + SF Metropolis Philoptochos President*

**"A tree is known by its fruit; a [wo]man by her deeds. A good deed is never lost; [s]he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and [s]he who plants kindness gathers love." – Saint Basil**

As a member of Philoptochos, you become an integral part of a Beautiful Garden with women of all ages, backgrounds, and gifts. Without that variety, our gardens would not flourish. In the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus shares with us the Parable of the Sower, we are taught to plant our seeds in fertile ground, so they may grow and flourish and bring forth a bountiful harvest. The same holds true for our efforts in growing the ministry of Philoptochos. The seeds we are planting today will create a strong foundation through their deep roots upon which we will continue to welcome, inform, and engage women, while empowering them to serve others, just as the Lord has taught us.

The Saint Helen Philoptochos Chapter in Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California, is a living example of growing their membership by cultivating a beautiful garden of faith. This was achieved through a hands-on project at the annual Membership Tea that involved members creating their own personal garden of succulents, while celebrating the diversity of women coming together for one common purpose and appreciating all parts of the Philoptochos Garden.

**The seeds** of the garden are simple, yet profoundly important: kind hearts and those with the ability and willingness to join and get involved. Embrace new ladies, our younger generation who are just being planted and beginning to take root. This will ensure that the gardens will grow and flourish for years to come, offering a variety of trees and plants to create a beautiful backdrop for the important work of Philoptochos.

**The roots** of the garden are kind thoughts: the result of deep roots in faith, tradition, and with each other. The soil has been cultivated before us by those who have instilled wisdom, strength, love and encouragement for all Philoptochos members. They have shown us the way.

**The blossoms** of the garden bloom when the roots take hold and women are cared for and engaged in purposeful movement. The blossoms are vital with the beauty of growth and a colorful new life in service to the Lord and to each other, as a visible witness to the devotion to this ministry.

**The fruit** of the garden reaps good deeds. When our garden is alive and vibrant, we truly embody Philoptochos, we are *Philanthropy~Fellowship~Faith in Action*. We are the garden of hope carrying out our mission to help all of those in need.

Let us all be in prayer for one another as we gather for our annual Membership events. May our Philoptochos Gardens continue to grow in faith and friendship and bear the fruit of love.



### Challenge Liturgy for Individuals with Special Needs

Last month, National President Maria Logus had the honor of attending the Challenge Liturgy at the Archangel Michael Greek Orthodox Church in Port Washington, New York. The program welcomes Orthodox Christians with intellectual and developmental disabilities to participate in parish life with a special Divine Liturgy held once a month. A fellowship coffee hour follows, and provides a setting for socializing amongst all parishioners.

President Logus said of her experience, "It was extraordinarily moving and inclusive, warm and welcoming, simple but lovely. The day was gratifying for all."

In addition to the Liturgy, there are other options for challenged individuals, such as Sunday School attendance, serving in the alter or singing in the Byzantine Youth Choir. Birthday and Nameday celebrations, as well as Easter and Christmas parties, are a few of the social events on the calendar.

The program was founded by husband-and-wife team Emmanuel and Marina Katsoulis, with Fr. Dennis Strouzos, in 1990. Marina Katsoulis, who currently serves on the Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos Board, was inspired by their own challenged daughter.

Katsoulis said, "It is important to parents that their children feel part of the church community. It was very important to me."

Now, the Katsoulis family is joined by about fifty others who come from the region and consider the program a priority. All challenged Orthodox Christians from the New York metropolitan area are invited and complimentary transportation is provided from some locations.

Preserving and perpetuating the Orthodox Christian faith by providing spiritual fulfillment for challenged individuals make the Challenge Liturgy Program a true blessing.



All Chapter Presidents and Board members should have begun planning their Chapter elections. In May 2017, each Philoptochos Chapter should hold elections for Board members. Upon ratification from the National Office, Officers can then be elected.

Here are some tips for making this a smooth process:

- Each Chapter President and Board should review and refresh themselves on the election rules and procedures as they have changed with a Resolution that was passed at the 2015 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention. This information can be found on the Philoptochos website. Click on [www.philoptochos.org](http://www.philoptochos.org) and look under "Resources" tab and click on "Membership and Elections" drop down and scroll down to *Elections 2017*.
- Each president should have appointed a Screening Committee to determine who is eligible to serve as a Board member **four months prior** to the election meeting.
- Prior to the election meeting, the Election Committee is appointed to determine who may vote in the election.

- Set the date for your May 2017, Chapter meeting and make sure that the entire Chapter membership is aware that this is a special meeting. Meeting notices need to be sent out **30 days prior** to the election date.
- The election meeting is held and the Chapter Board is elected. Please remember that you **must have an odd number** of Board members for voting purposes. If your Chapter has a Past President Advisor, they are to be included on this list and in the total count.
- **Within 14 days** of the election of the Chapter Board, the names of the newly-elected Board members are emailed to the National Office for ratification through the *2017 Election of Board Members* online Excel form, found on the website.
- The Parish Priest and Elections Chairman must **sign and submit the Elections Cover Form** on or near the same day as the newly elected Board list in order to be ratified. This PDF form with signatures needs to be scanned and emailed or faxed to the National Office.
- **Upon written receipt of ratification** from the National Office, the Parish Priest administers the oath of office.
- The newly sworn Board convenes to elect Chapter Officers. Email the Officers Form spreadsheet (found on the web) to the National Office. Remember that there should be **no third terms without a formal waiver** from the National President, submitted with the Officers Form.
- The ratification process from the National Office will go very quickly if Chapters follow the election procedures. In particular, **Chapters need to submit the 2017 Election of Board Members and also Officers in Excel forms via email ONLY.**

Make your election meeting a special event by holding a potluck dinner, having pizza delivered or an ice-cream social! Use it as an evening to celebrate the newly-elected Board and to thank the previous Officers and Board for their service.



## Philoptochos to Serve One Million Meals by 2018

**#onemillionmeals**

The National Philoptochos Feed the Hungry program began as part of National Philoptochos President Maria Logus'

goal of "doing -- more hands on philanthropy, engaging all members of our community in our work." In February 2015, President Logus challenged chapters to prepare and offer 250,000 meals by the National Philoptochos Biennial Convention in July 2016. At the Convention, it was reported that the Feed the Hungry Initiative provided over 750,000 meals— more than triple the original goal.

Over this period, the National Philoptochos Feed the Hungry Committee has seen a 25% increase in guests (from about 100 to 125) in their monthly program near Penn Station in New York City. Hot food runs out faster, leaving only cold sandwiches for the latecomers. Across the country, other programs have experienced an increase, as well. The Feeding the Hungry initiative so directly encapsulates the mission of Philoptochos and now, the need is greater than before.

President Logus has upped the original goal by inviting Philoptochos chapters and stewards to continue to offer wholesome and hearty meals to the homeless and hungry. She says, "Our goal, challenging but certainly achievable, is to offer one million meals before our next convention in 2018 and to experience both the joy and the rewards of this service, over and over again."

Please note that with this new goal, we announce a new hashtag to mark your social media posts: #onemillionmeals and a new email address: [onemillionmeals@philoptochos.org](mailto:onemillionmeals@philoptochos.org). Please send photos and anything new that you would like to share from your chapter's Feed the Hungry program to that address. *Please note that the [250thousandmeals@philoptochos.org](mailto:250thousandmeals@philoptochos.org) is no longer in service.*

For questions or to submit data, please contact the Feeding the Hungry Liaison in your Metropolis. [Click here](#) for the list.



### **Be sure to read the January 2017 Philoptochos Blog Entry!**

Lekita Essa, from Raleigh, North Carolina, shared her delightful blog entry about the role and value of the Philoptochos women in her life who have inspired her.

Take a few minutes to read it and all the other wonderful blog entries submitted by Philoptochos members from around the country. Click [here](#).

Do you have a personal Philoptochos story that you would like to share with all members? It's a very easy process to submit a blog entry! You never know who will be inspired by your words!

Please click [here](#) to read all blog entries and to see basic guidelines for submission. We would love to hear from you!

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## February National Ministry Commitments



### **Commitment: Autism Assistance Fund**

*Marian Catechis, Chair*

More than 3.5 million Americans live with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our communities benefit by supporting autistic individuals and their families. To heighten awareness of autism, the Autism Assistance Fund was established in 2008. The purpose of the fund is to provide assistance and support to persons within the autism spectrum.

February has been designated as the month to support this discretionary fund and with the generous support of our chapters, we have disbursed \$161,330 since 2009. We have donated \$134,800 to organizations that provide programs for autistic individuals. We have also donated \$26,530 to assist individuals with such needs as educational services, respite care and therapy, which is not covered by health insurance.

The financial support of all Philotochos chapters allows us to continue meeting the needs of those individuals with autism. Please support this fund.

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### **Commitment: Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine**

*Betty Lantz, Chair*

Celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Saint Photios Shrine is truly a "Beacon of Greek Orthodoxy" in America. Located on St. George Street in the historic city of St. Augustine, Florida, and named for Saint Photios, the Great Patriarch of Constantinople, the Shrine is dedicated to the first colony of Greeks who came to America in 1768.

The Shrine consists of exhibits depicting the life of the early Greek colonists in America and the development of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. Thousands of visitors annually visit this very special place. A beautiful Byzantine Chapel is at the Shrine where all are welcomed to light candles, venerate the icons and pray.

Philoptochos has long supported this wonderful Shrine and its ministry through the annual February chapter commitment. In 2016, \$29,000 was donated to the Saint Photios Shrine bringing the total donated over the past ten years to \$256,700.

If you have not personally visited the Shrine, it would be a powerful experience. Philoptochos chapters are encouraged to come as a group to visit this center of Greek Orthodox Faith and share its beauty and historic significance.

All chapters are asked to please continue their tradition of generosity to the Saint Photios National Shrine.



### **Working Together to Make a Dream Come True**

In support of the relocation and expansion of St. Michael's Home, the Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos women presented their Third Agape Luncheon on December 10th at the Long Island Marriott Hotel in Uniondale, New York. All proceeds for this Luncheon benefited the fund for the new St. Michael's Home, which will be located in Uniondale, New York. It is the only elder care facility in the U.S. under the aegis of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and serves not only Orthodox Christians from the New York area but also throughout the country.

The Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos is composed of 56 sister Philoptochos chapters and over 3,500 women which geographically include southern New York State, most of Connecticut and Washington, D.C. Together, the members of the Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos board of directors worked diligently to present an afternoon of comradery for all. Close to 400 members and guests attended, including our National President, Maria Logus. The result was a truly memorable and financially successful event with \$60,000 raised for St. Michael's Home.

At the luncheon, the audience was addressed by His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, and Chancellor of the Archdiocese, His Grace Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, the Director of the Home.

A special video was screened, detailing the continuum of care that will be the hallmark of the new St. Michael's Home, which will include residential apartments, assisted living facilities, skilled nursing and advanced care for dementia and Alzheimer's patients. In all, the facility will be able to accommodate 160 or more residents. The heart of the home will be the Greek Orthodox Chapel.



The new St. Michael's Home will be situated on an 11 acre parcel. Beautifully landscaped grounds will enhance the experience for residents and visitors.

The event included the drawing for raffle prizes from various generous donors and Philoptochos chapters. Greek background music was a suitable accompaniment that added to the enjoyment of the event.

As His Grace, Bishop Andonios remarks frequently, "fasouli, fasouli, yemisi to sakouli".....meaning "bean by bean, the bag fills up" (that is, even the smallest donations will add up). His message brought smiles and lots of applause! With this luncheon, the Direct Archdiocesan District women are proud to work towards making this dream a reality. For more details go to the website [www.StMichaelsHome.org](http://www.StMichaelsHome.org) or telephone (914) 327-3066.



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