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Philanthropy Witness



The Official Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

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Chapters across the Country are Serving the Community

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The Philoptochos of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Kansas City, Missouri, held a service project called *Promote Reading thru Books and Blankets*. Parishioners donated new and gently used hard covered picture books to the program. The event included a general meeting, a pot luck dinner, and-- most importantly for the ministry-- a hands-on project of tying fleece blankets. (Photo above.) With the success of this service project, Philoptochos donated 43 "book and blanket" sets to the *Parents as Teachers* Program in Kansas City Center Schools to promote reading in preschool age children.

In Dec., the chapter mailed 35 care packages to college students and at the *Cookie Exchange*, assembled gifts bags with baked items, gifts and cards to take to 121 homebound parishioners. (Photos below.)



For the fifth year in a row, the **Anthousa Chapter of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in San Diego, California**, hosted the *Angels Christmas Party* for 30 foster families from San Diego Youth Services, an organization whose motto is "Building Futures for At-Risk Youth." The women of Philoptochos and parishioners of all ages came together to produce the December event. In the church hall, guests enjoyed dinner, music, entertainment, crafts, and a visit from Santa, who had gifts for the children as well as their parents. According to the director of San Diego Youth Services, "The holidays can be a very tough time for a lot of our kids and this is an event that adds a huge amount of joy to a particularly challenging time of the year." The chapter collected cash donations, gift cards, food and drink from parishioners and local businesses to completely fund the event. Additionally, through the generosity of the donors, a monetary contribution was made to San Diego Youth Services to hold a family event in the summer.

The **Three Hierarchs Philoptochos Chapter of Cheyenne, Wyoming** has created a tradition for the past several years, in which it "adopts" families in need from the local school district and works closely with their social workers. The social workers are given confidential coded forms to fill out, including Christmas gift requests for the children. Sunday schoolers cut out paper hands that are coded to each family. The needs of each child are printed on a hand, with the code on the back. They are then hung on a Christmas tree, and members of the community take hands off the tree and purchase the item that is on it, and return it and the paper hand to church. Before school is dismissed for Christmas break, the gifts are taken to each of the schools and delivered to the families.



In addition, Three Hierarchs Philoptochos is selling aprons in black or royal blue with the National Philoptochos emblem embroidered on the bib. (Photo above.) The butcher style aprons are made of heavy cotton with two pockets in front and adjustable neck and waist ties. These can be purchased for \$40 each, including shipping. The women of the chapter wear them when they are serving at events. To purchase aprons, contact Ida Mae Apostolou: greekishx2@bresnan.net. All monies collected benefit the philanthropic work of the chapter.

In December, the **Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral Philoptochos of Portland, Oregon** held a *Christmas Toy Drive* to provide new toys for social service case workers in Multnomah County to distribute to foster children at Christmas. The pile of toys was a joy to behold, including a new bicycle donated for a child.

Spread the Warmth Sock Drive is currently underway at the Holy Trinity Cathedral. During this cold and wet Oregon winter season, homeless shelters are at capacity and socks are one of the most requested items. The chapter is collecting socks for men, women and children to be donated to various local homeless shelters.



Be a Part of Rebuilding St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine

Jennifer Constantin ~ Arlene Siavelis Kehl ~

Anne Michals, Co-Chairs

Throughout the years, Philoptochos has always prided itself on fulfilling any request that His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America has made of us. Inspired by His Eminence's appeal to raise funds for the reconstruction of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center in New York City, and his confidence in Philoptochos to unite and take action, we immediately responded by creating a special committee, led by National Board members Jennifer Constantin, Arlene Siavelis Kehl and Anne Michals.

Philoptochos joined the entire national church to become stakeholders in this great project. As a precedent, Philoptochos was a major benefactor for the rededication of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty in 1986.

An initiative was set in motion in September 2014, through a letter to all Philoptochos Chapter Presidents in each Metropolis, to give prayerful consideration and support to this worthy cause. The letter, from then-National Philoptochos President Aphrodite Skeadas, noted that the "Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, the backbone of our parishes, must play a vital role in this sacred mission! Together let us rebuild Saint Nicholas for all future generations, and for the many millions of people who will visit every year the new World Trade Center, the National September 11 Memorial Museum and our National Shrine, the only house of worship at Ground Zero".

In September 2015, National Philoptochos President Maria Logus issued another letter to all Philoptochos Chapter Presidents and Stewards, writing, "The challenge before each of us is clear. We, each of us, must honor the sacrifice and not shrink from our obligation to rebuild the Church. We, each of us, must through our participation, signal to all that our democratic foundations and deeply held religious beliefs cannot be, and will not be, destroyed. We, each of us, must choose the light of faith over the darkness of despair". Philoptochos chapters around the country have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine. These funds have been raised through a variety of activities – boat cruises, concerts, sales of baked goods, candles, candy and cookbooks, luncheons, direct mail appeals, individual donations and much more.

In the words of President Logus, "Through our combined efforts, our Church will offer the country and the world a place of prayer and healing."

For information and resources, visit www.philoptochos.org/news/saintnicholas. To be part of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center Philoptochos Fundraising Initiative, please donate directly to your local Philoptochos Chapter or your Metropolis Philoptochos.

AGAPE Awards and More at the Philoptochos Convention

Irene Arsoniadis and Theone Dickos, Co-Chairs

The 2016 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention Co-Chairs greet you with love in Christ. As we mark 85 years of Philanthropy in Nashville, the Music City, we celebrate the women who served in the past, the women who serve today, and the women who will serve in the future. Our host, the Detroit Metropolis Philoptochos eagerly awaits your attendance. We look forward to members joining their sisters for the 2016 Convention. By now, your chapter presidents have received an emailed letter regarding the **National Philoptochos AGAPE Awards Program**. This program honors one Philoptochos member from each Metropolis and the Direct Archdiocesan District with the AGAPE Award. This award is bestowed upon those members who embody the true meaning of **Philanthropy** both in word and deed. **The AGAPE Award submission form deadline is March 21, 2016**. All chapters are encouraged to submit a worthy candidate for consideration of this auspicious recognition.

Nine chapters, one from each Metropolis and the Direct Archdiocesan District are diligently working on their **Chapter Challenge Projects**. These chapters, who were chosen at the 2014 Convention, will present a unique philanthropic service project they created to meet the Challenge. We hope these presentations at the Convention will give other chapters inspiration for future projects of their own. In this Convention update, we have highlighted five Chapter Challenges. They will surely be of interest to chapters seeking new ways to philanthropically serve their communities. (The remaining four Chapter Challenges will be highlighted in the next issue of the newsletter.)

Metropolis of Detroit- The Philoptochos of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church of Buffalo, New York, is focusing on “Assisting Refugees Far and Near,” by aiding two groups of individuals attempting to start new and better lives. The chapter is pairing with a refugee center to provide baby supplies to refugee mothers and expectant mothers. The chapter is also assisting women and children who are “refugees” from domestic violence. They have paired with another local agency, and are providing them with financial assistance and materials for their program.

Metropolis of San Francisco- The Philoptochos of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego, California is distributing 500 “Blessing Bags” containing necessities and a spiritual message for the homeless in San Diego County. High school students are encouraged to partner with Philoptochos to gain insight into the growing needs of the homeless community.

Metropolis of New Jersey- The Philoptochos of Saint Demetrios Cathedral, Baltimore, Maryland, is working to support computer access and literacy for the underprivileged of the Baltimore Metropolitan area. The project, “Bridging the Digital Divide,” encompasses computer literacy programs, and the reusing and recycling of computers.

Metropolis of Atlanta- The Philoptochos of Saint Mark Greek Orthodox Church, Boca Raton, Florida, is working on the renovation of a soup kitchen that provides meals for the poor and the homeless. “The Caring Kitchen” in Delray Beach, Florida, is in need of a facelift to their facilities.

Metropolis of Chicago- The Philoptochos of Ascension of Our Lord Greek Orthodox Church in Lincolnshire, Illinois, is working on a project that creates and distributes various types of bags filled with items to meet the physical and spiritual requirements of individuals in need. The Chapter’s “Fill the Bag” project provides a simple template for the following five types of bags-- Child’s Book Bag, Feed the Hungry Bag, Prison Ministry Bag, Veterans Bag, and Bag of Comfort.



Understanding the Future Members of Philoptochos

Alexis Limberakis and Maria Tamvakologos, Co-Chairs

Philoptochos is excited about attracting younger members to chapters across the country. In order to encourage Generation X (born between 1965 and 1984) and Millennial (born 1985 and later) members, it is important to understand their characteristic traits. Here are a few key facts to keep in mind regarding potential members of both these generations.

COMMUNICATION STYLE:

They prefer clear, concise communication, preferably by email. They do not like wordy explanations.

VOLUNTEER STYLE:

They want autonomy because they do not like being micromanaged. They do not want to work on anything they believe will be a waste of their time.

TO AVOID:

Chaos, distrust, loyalty that goes unrewarded.

Think about how your chapter operates. What can you do to make these changes? One idea used by several chapters is the CALL ME ONCE sheet.

Generation X and Millennials are time conscious due to the high demands of the world we live in. Therefore, when Philoptochos begins their recruitment, they could make it known that potential members can sign a CALL ME ONCE sheet. This makes volunteering manageable for even the busiest person, by asking for help for only a few hours, once a year. By doing so, they can relax about the time commitment and still be part of Philoptochos.

The CALL ME ONCE sheet is very important for chapters to promote to its younger members. They know exactly what is expected of them, they are in control, and they have a say in when they will be available for that one special event they want to participate in.

Send clear concise emails, use the CALL ME ONCE sheet, reward loyalty and encourage younger women to join the Philoptochos sisterhood!

PHOTO: St. Barbara Philoptochos Membership Luncheon in Scottsdale, AZ on January 30, 2016.



Philanthropy-Fellowship-Faith in Action

**Cathedral of the Annunciation
"CALL ME ONCE"
Volunteer Sign up 2016/2017**

Listed below are several volunteer opportunities for Philoptochos members. Place a check next to each volunteer opportunity that you would like to participate in. We will contact you before the event with specific information. You will only be contacted for the volunteer event that you have chosen.

Volunteer Opportunities

- Vasilopita Cutting (January) Shut In Visitations (January)
- Host Fellowship Hour (February) Visit Homeless Shelter (February)
- Vespers with light reception (March) Nameday Luncheon (March)
- Dyeing of Easter Eggs (April) Easter Baking Marathon (April)
- Homeless Veterans Visit (May) Mothers Day Tea Reception (May)
- Membership Dinner (June) Baking for Food Festival (June)
- Festival Table Representative (June)

On-Call Volunteer Opportunities

If you are not sure right now how you can help, but would like to be involved in the future, your name can go on our "on-call" volunteer list. If we find we're short-handed for an event, we'll go to our on-call list and check with you to see if you can help with the event.

Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Stay up to date with Philoptochos happenings by visiting our website at:
(Include your Philoptochos Chapter's website)

**Reminder to Chapters:
Please complete the Online Membership Excel Form**

To access a step-by-step bullet point guide to filling out the form, as well as a screen shot tutorial, and to find other membership resources, please go to www.philoptochos.org and under the Resources tab, go to the Membership & Elections dropdown menu. Under 2016 Membership you will find

[How to Complete the Online Membership Excel Form](#)
[Screen Shot Tutorial for Membership Excel Form](#)

FEBRUARY NATIONAL MINISTRY COMMITMENTS

Autism Assistance Fund

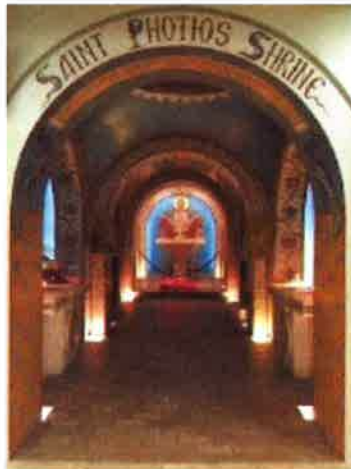
Barbara Vittas, Chair

More than 3.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder. Communities as a whole benefit by supporting autistic individuals and their families.

To heighten the awareness of autism throughout Philoptochos and to provide assistance and support to persons within the autism spectrum, the Autism Assistance Fund was established in July 2008 at the National Biennial Convention in Washington, DC.

February has been designated as the month to support this discretionary fund and with the generosity of our chapters, we have been able to disburse \$133,530 since the fund's inception. These monies have covered many needs, including educational services to help improve the communication and relationship skills of children and adults, expenses which are otherwise not covered under health insurance plans.

Please open your hearts this February and support our National Philoptochos Autism Assistance Fund by sending your donation to the National Philoptochos Society earmarked Autism Assistance Fund.



Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine

Joanne Stavrakas, Chair

This year the **St. Photios Shrine** celebrates the **34th anniversary** of its dedication. **Saint Photios**, the **Great Patriarch of Constantinople**, for whom the Shrine is named, was prophetic and eager to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth. One of his greatest achievements was mission work, when in 863 he sent his two nephews from Thessaloniki to preach the Gospel to the Slavic peoples. Today we know them as Saints Cyril and Methodios. **Saint Photios Shrine** is the "Jewel of St. George Street" in St. Augustine, Florida, and remains the "Beacon of Greek Orthodoxy in America."

Philoptochos Chapters are asked to lead their communities in the collection of donations for the continued progress of fulfilling the mission of the Shrine – to witness our Orthodox faith while sharing our Hellenic culture with the thousands of people who visit yearly.

In support of the **Saint Photios Shrine**, we encourage our Chapters to:

- Send the discretionary National Ministry Commitment in February 2016 to the National Philoptochos office
- Attend Landing Day Celebrations in June and/or offer a greeting in the album
- Plan a visit with your Philoptochos chapter and include your parish family

To learn more about St. Photios Shrine and participate in their programs, including "Light a Candle," "Wall of Tribute," "Friend of the Shrine," and "Essay Contest," please visit their website: www.stphotios.com.

The **Saint Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine**, an institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, is dedicated to the first colony of Greek people who came to America in 1768. When we support the Shrine, we are continuing the commission of St. Photios the Great and remembering our early ancestors and all our *protoporoi* who believed that a better life was worth the sacrifice of leaving their motherland.

In 2015, \$20,500 was donated and in the ten year period between 2006 and 2015, \$252,700 was donated to St. Photios through the National Philoptochos Commitment. A heartfelt thank you to all who have contributed. Through the united efforts of our chapters and with your generous donations, our Shrine will continue to illuminate all in the Holy Orthodox faith.



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