NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT: JANUARY 1 – OCTOBER 31, 2019

Social Services Committee Co-Chairs: Efthalia (Lily) Katos and Stella Pantelidis
National Board Liaison: Evangeline Mekras Scurtis
Services Delivered by Social Work Services Director: Paulette Geanacopoulos, LMSW

Metropolis Presidents & Social Services
Archdiocesan District: President Jennifer Constantin; Georgeann Papadakos, Esq.
Atlanta: President Irene Politis; Presbytera Evi Kaplanis, Tina Chagaris
Boston: President Elaine Zetes; Georgia Lagadinos
Chicago: President Pam Argyris; Helen Theodosakis
Denver: President Barbara Vittas,
Detroit: President Theone Dickos
New Jersey: President Eleni Constantinides, (Previously Social Services Liaison)
Pittsburgh: President Crystal Thomas
San Francisco: President Jeannie Ranglas; Lisa Xanthos

# CLIENTS SERVED: 121

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BY METROPOLIS</th>
<th>AGE OF CLIENT</th>
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<td>OTHER (Greece, Uganda)</td>
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PRESENTING PROBLEM

| CANCER / MAJOR MEDICAL (Uncovered Medical Expenses) | 32 |
| HOUSING (Eviction Prevention/ Relocation/ Homeless - street, car) | 25 |
| FUNERAL – (3 referred by OCME) | 21 |
| SINGLE PARENT / POVERTY (Death of earner; abandonment; illness) | 10 |
| AGING SERVICES (Homecare; socialization) | 9 |
| DOMESTIC VIOLENCE / RAPE | 7 |
| DISABLED / INSUFFICIENT INCOME | 6 |
| MENTAL ILLNESS | 6 |
| UNDOCUMENTED | 3 |
| EMPLOYMENT | 1 |
| ADOPTION | 1 |

GRANT AWARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL AWARDED: 91,044.49</th>
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<tr>
<td># of grants...............</td>
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<td># of different beneficiaries:</td>
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<tr>
<th>PURPOSE OF ASSISTANCE</th>
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<td>HOUSING RELATED</td>
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<td>Eviction Prevention /DV relocation</td>
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<td>EMERGENCY RELIEF</td>
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OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIAL SERVICES
https://www.philoptochos.org/socialservices/

WHO WE HELP:
- We assist Orthodox Christian individuals and families who are in the United States, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status, who are experiencing human service and/or financial challenges.
  - We help our “clients” address and resolve, as best as possible, the problems they face in a manner that maintains their privacy, self-determination and independence and supports their faith and spirituality.
  - Those who are not Orthodox Christians are provided information and referrals to other programs and services – nobody is “turned away” because they are not Greek Orthodox.
  - All services are delivered by a Master level Social Worker, licensed in the State of New York. Financial assistance requests are reviewed by the two Social Services Committee Co-Chairs.

WHY PEOPLE TURN TO US FOR HELP:
Most of the people who seek our assistance never thought they would have to ask anyone for help, let alone us. These are some of the reasons members of our community reach out to us for help:
- THE ECONOMY:
  - Loss of employment, underemployment, end of or denial of benefits (e.g.) unemployment, TANF, SSI, SSD, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, etc.
  - Stop-gap time while client awaits decision about their eligibility for public or other benefits.
  - Undocumented immigrants who seek housing or employment – some are women seeking live-in homecare jobs, others are elderly men who have been in the US for many years but no longer can realistically work. They are not eligible for most public benefits or entitlements and inevitably face poverty and homelessness.
- DISASTERS:
  - Natural disasters or catastrophes – earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, etc.
  - Human-made disasters – fire, accidents, attacks, etc.
- FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES:
  - Divorce, abandonment, domestic violence, ‘dead-beat’ parent, death, other
- HEALTH, MEDICAL, UNCOVERED EXPENSES:
  - Acute, chronic, life-threatening illness, disability of client or family’s primary ‘bread winner’.
  - Studies show 60% of personal bankruptcy filings in the United States are caused by uncovered medical bills.
- ALCOHOL, SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS, OPIOID ADDICTION:
  - Impacts user and their family and friends – financial, physical, emotional, psychological
- MENTAL HEALTH:
  - Illness of client or family member; inability to follow through on treatment plans; refusing medications/ not following directions; has become immobile due to mental status.
- JUDGMENT:
  - Oftentimes, the path to good judgment is paved by a series of poor ones, however, we do not believe that the penalty for poor judgment should be homelessness.
- HABITUAL “ASKER”:
  - Believes others should ‘rescue’ them, or whose “job” has become asking for help from chapter to chapter
- SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT:
  - Those who believe we must help them because they are (Greek) Orthodox and we are Philoptochos.

SERVICES PROVIDED:
- Supportive Counseling, Short-term Interventions, and Interim Case Management
- Information, Referrals and Advocacy (IRA) to local and broader resources
- Through collaborations and coordination with Philoptochos Metropolises and local chapters:
  - spiritual counseling
  - food/meal preparation
  - supermarket gift cards
  - friendly visiting
  - escort/translation at local offices
  - clothing and school supplies
  - respite care
  - transportation to church shopping, etc.
- Limited financial assistance in accordance with Philoptochos policies and procedures. (See website)
WHAT OUR FINANCIAL GRANTS CAN DO:

- Prevent evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut-offs
- Relocate victims of intimate partner abuse to a safe environment
- Contribute to uncovered/denied medical bills
- Contribute to funerals of indigent persons to ensure they receive a proper Orthodox burial
- Provide “stop gap” assistance while clients await determination or start of public benefits
  - Care is taken to ensure our financial help is given in a way that will not be “counted as income” so as not to delay or deny their applications for public benefits,
- Assist with limited local transportation expenses.
- We reimburse Metropolis/local chapters if the local affiliate has maxed out the help it can provide
- We try to be flexible to the best of our ability so that we can respond to the various and sometimes unique financial challenges faced by members of our community.

FOR EXAMPLE, we paid to have heavy duty cleaners clear out the apartment of a hoarder to prevent her eviction and placement into an institution. We also paid to have pipes installed to provide water to a client’s trailer.

WHAT PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIAL SERVICES FINANCIAL GRANTS CANNOT DO:

- We do not provide direct cash assistance to clients
- We do not contribute to accounts of any kind, whether crowdfunding sites, bank, hospital or other.
- We do not pay bills to vendors overseas
- We do not send money to persons outside the United States requesting help for any reason.
- We do not cover airfare to/from the US, nor contribute to the cost of shipping remains overseas.
- We do not contribute to cremations.

CASE HIGHLIGHTS FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY
ALL WERE ASSISTED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE LOCAL CHAPTER AND METROPOLIS PHILOPTOCHOS

39-year-old asylum seeker born in Kurdistan who began writing poetry at the age of 13. When she was 16, she started a movement against the Iranian theocratic oppression of women, for which she was imprisoned and tortured. In 2000, she was exiled to Greece where she was given refugee status. In 2001, she published a collection of her Kurdish poems - Secrets of the Snow, that reflect the pain and suffering she experienced and witnessed in her life. She subsequently relocated to New York on a UN passport. She holds a PhD in social and political science and speaks Greek, Kurdish, Persian, Dari, Arabic, and English. Her book was translated into Greek and English - the English version is available on Amazon. Her asylum status is still pending, and she continues to seek employment and permanent housing.

4-year-old little girl who at age 14 months was diagnosed with a tumor in her brain stem the size of a baseball. Surgeries and chemo left her with physical deficiencies of balance issues, double vision, left face paralysis, and verbal delays. Although initial scans showed the tumor had shrunk, subsequent scans showed an aggressive increase in its size. The family traveled to 12 different institutions seeking treatment including Dana Farber, MD Anderson, Memorial Sloan Kettering and Johns Hopkins, but as each only suggested chemotherapy, which had not worked before, they continued their search. In February 2018, they found an out-of-state clinic that is successfully shrinking the child’s tumor- but at a cost of $17,000/ month. Because it is considered experimental, it is not covered by the family’s insurance. Thus far, the family has paid $300,000 out-of-pocket and they estimate that another $150,000 - $200,000 will be needed over the next nine months. To pay these expenses, the family sold their home in Cyprus, exhausted their savings and benefitted from fundraising conducted by family and friends in their native Cyprus. They started a GoFundMe account which in about three years only has yielded $8,000.00 in contributions.

34-year-old victim of domestic violence who found us online, and who requested financial assistance to be able to flee her abusive partner and relocate to safe housing.
7-year-old little boy who was born extremely premature at only twenty-four weeks. This resulted in a complex medical history that has affected his health, growth, and development in significant ways. He has suffered from GERD, acquired subglottic stenosis, previous tracheotomy dependence, and airway reconstruction twice. He requires special education services, speech therapy due to speech delays related in part to his chronic lung disease, and occupational therapies. Since birth, his multiple medical issues have necessitated 35 trips to an out-of-state hospital, with two more scheduled in 2019. Although the child’s medical expenses are covered by the father’s health insurance and Medicaid, their travel, housing and living costs are all out-of-pocket. With income of about $51,000/ year – the dad is a teacher and the mom is a substitute teacher - their son’s medical related costs coupled with their daily living expenses for utilities, telephone, food and more, they exhausted their savings and maxed out their credit cards.

50-year-old woman and her 20-year-old severely autistic daughter were rendered homeless when they were discharged from a local hospital without any plan in place for their emergency housing needs, essentially discharging them to the street on a cold day. They sought refuge at a different hospital where they were seen by the Psychiatric Division of the Emergency Department. This department asked the social workers at ICMS – the Behavioral Health Program - to help the family locate shelter and support resources. Because the department director is the hospital’s liaison for Consulate and community agencies, the local Greek Orthodox Church, and thus local Philoptochos Chapter were contacted. Through collaborative efforts among all three levels of Philoptochos and the hospital, the family was placed in a small family shelter and after a period, into subsidized supportive housing. The local Philoptochos chapter also was able to provide the family with donated furniture for their apartment.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY SOCIAL SERVICES:

Resource Development
- We developed and distributed a nationwide “Brief Guide to Finding Local Programs and Services”
- We develop and distribute fact sheets that focus on relevant human services issues. (See website).

Presentations/Seminars:
- Telephone Cancer Support Group:
  - We conducted a 6-week Telephone Cancer Support Group for women undergoing cancer treatment with spiritual leadership provided by Rev. Dr. Harry Pappas of Archangels Michael Church, Stamford, CT.
- Domestic Violence, Mental Illness and Opioid Addiction:
  - At the 2012 and 2014 Philoptochos Conventions, we organized panel discussions on Domestic Violence and Mental Illness respectively comprising local professionals and family members with Rev. Nick Anctil, Holy Trinity, New Rochelle NY providing ways the Orthodox Church can respond. (See website for summaries).
  - Domestic Violence:
    - Published article in Orthodox Observer on Domestic Violence at request of Center for Family Care.
    - Developed “palm cards” on domestic violence to be left in women’s rooms of churches.
    - Conducted interactive webinar on domestic violence with Rev. Chrysostomos Gilbert, NYC
  - Opioid Addiction:
    - Helped NJ Metropolis Philoptochos develop a workshop on Opioid Addiction for its November 2019 meeting.

Other Activities:
- Pan-Orthodox Network on Homelessness:
  We represent Philoptochos on the Orthodox Christian Ministries on Homelessness, a Pan-Orthodox nationwide network organized by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese whose goal is to use the collective experiences of participating organizations to educate the faithful about poverty and homelessness and encourage them to develop local faith-based programs.
  - We serve on the Board of Directors of Philoxenia, Inc., a nonprofit that addresses homelessness through direct services and grants to local community-based organizations.
  - We wrote the introduction to a chapter in “Last Night’s Soup Run”, by Despina Kartson, Philoxenia president. (Pages 25-27).
  - We recently stepped down from serving as President of Spring Creek Senior Partners, a NORC Supportive Services Program (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) in East New York, Brooklyn that provides health and social services to over 1,000 older adults annually.