

**GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, INC.
NATIONAL COMMITTEE REPORT
2018-2020**



SAINT BASIL ACADEMY

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[Saint Basil Academy](#), for more than 76 years, has been ministering to children in need. The children of Saint Basil Academy come from broken homes where there may have been physical and psychological abuse, alcohol and drug addictions, abandonments, violence, severe illnesses, and deaths. The mission is to minister to the whole child: mind, body, and spirit. With shelter, protection, love, and education they grow up to be healthy, wholesome, well-rounded Orthodox Christians, as well as productive members of society with vision and hope.

Archbishop Athenagoras of Blessed Memory founded Saint Basil Academy in 1944 with the valuable assistance of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society. On March 15, 1944, the Philoptochos purchased the 400-acre Jacob Ruppert estate in Garrison New York, on the shores of the Hudson River, overlooking West Point Academy. Saint Basil Academy, as envisioned by the late Patriarch Athenagoras, has expanded in scope to be a well-equipped Residential Child Care Center, with modern dormitories, a gymnasium/auditorium, indoor swimming pool, beautiful chapel, library and all the necessary comforts of a loving home.

The Saint Basil Academy child population is made up of children from the Academy's three on campus programs: Residential Program, Bridge Program, Family Program. The residential children's parents are deceased or unable to care for them; the residential staff take on a parental role and minister physical and psychological support. The Bridge students, often from our residential program, have graduated from high school or an equivalent academic program, are expected to attend school and/or hold a full-time job. They live independently while receiving academic and therapeutic support from our Saint Basil Academy staff. The Family Program children come from broken families where the mom is homeless and needs shelter and support. To avoid the trauma of separation from the mother, Saint Basil Academy provides food and shelter to the children while helping the Orthodox mothers become self-sufficient, educated, and well-rounded Orthodox parents. All the Saint Basil Academy children attend chapel daily and are offered spiritual guidance. Presently there are 30 residents at the Academy ranging in age from 1 year to 27 years of age,

The children at Saint Basil Academy are enrolled in a pre-school, school, college, or educational program befitting his or her educational capabilities and needs. In addition, every child who attends Saint Basil Academy is offered the highest level of psychological and educational care. The clinical team works collaboratively with residential life staff and the education center team to provide psychological and educational assessments that result in a highly comprehensive and

individualized treatment plan. Additionally, the clinical staff specializes in clinically proven psychological and educational interventions that include but are not limited to family and group therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, attachment theory interventions, cognitive behavioral therapy, life skills coaching, animal-assisted and nature-based therapy. Saint Basil Academy is also used as a training facility for advanced level social work graduate students from New York University and Fordham University.

The 75th Anniversary Celebration that was to have taken place June 2020 has been postponed. We thank each and every Philoptochos Chapter and supporters for their continued contributions to this most worthwhile institution of the Archdiocese that we are the caretakers of.

2019-2020 Saint Basil Academy Highlights

- **On October 3, 2019**, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros was welcomed to Saint Basil Academy by administrators, children, and staff.
- A graveside Trisagion service in memory of Archbishop Michael was held.
- An Agiasmos service for the children and guests was held in the Saint Basil Academy Chapel.
- His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros toured the Saint Basil Academy grounds and Early Learning Center.
- The children sorted dry goods for a homeless shelter and named their project “Project Hope” in honor of our Archbishop.
- His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros participated in birthday celebrations of three Saint Basil Academy children.
- Father Sitaras presented our beloved Archbishop with a clock that displays the time of the Patriarchate and the Archdiocese.
- His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros presented Father Costa with an icon of Saint Andrew and praised him for his good work and dedication to Saint Basil Academy.

- **Covid-19 Individualized Online Education-** Starting in March, the Education Center worked with all the Saint Basil children from K-12 to complete their online work. All children who were slated to graduate graduated. The remaining children achieved success in completing their grade level. All students were offered therapeutic services in conjunction with their schooling.
- **Saint Basil Chapel Sunday Divine Liturgy** live-streamed on YouTube until July 12. Following the guidelines of the Archdiocese, regular attendees were invited to worship with limited numbers while following the appropriate PPE protocols. For the safety of the congregation and students alike, the Saint Basil Academy student population did not physically attend.
- **Saint Basil Summer Academy (COVID sensitive)-** This unique program was designed to normalize the children’s summer experience while acknowledging the stresses and changes that were brought about by the pandemic. The Summer Academy included ongoing therapeutic services, a work program for high schoolers, theme weeks (luau, fairytale, under the sea, superhero) for the middle school ages and younger as well as Covid safe outings and get-togethers for all kids of all ages.

- **Saint Basil Academy** partnered with **Haldane's Heartfelt Committee**. A food donation was organized to give to families in need during the pandemic
- In response to the Archbishop's mandate to focus on homelessness, **Project Hope**, was formed. This Saint Basil Academy program was designed to raise awareness of and to help the homeless of our community. Saint Basil students joined the staff and brought food to local shelters.
- **Saint Basil Academy** is currently established as a **respite location** for all officers with the **Putnam County Sheriff's Office** as well as its **School Resource Officer** at Haldane.
- The **Saint Basil Homeschool Academy** partnered with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in their **Coffee with a Cop program**. Saint Basil students visited and interviewed the officers with specific questions about trauma and around occupations and life goals.
- **National Council on Behavioral Health's-- Mental Health First Aid Training** was offered to Saint Basil Academy staff as well as individuals from Archdiocese. Future to train the **Putnam County Sheriff's Office cadets** in combination with Saint Basil Academy staff is being scheduled.
- A partnership with the **TASC (formerly GED) program at Dutchess Community College** continued. Foundations work in the Homeschool Academy was implemented after the TASC school day ended. In addition, a psychiatrically sound wellness program (approved and lauded by the attending Psychiatrist) was implemented in the curriculum this year. It combines weight room activity, swim lessons and mindfulness.
- A **hybrid Bishop Dunn/Education Center curriculum** was designed to help the middle schoolers complete all classes in the Education Center at Saint Basil Academy. The Mindful Swim Program as well as a Junior Lifeguarding program was also implemented in this curriculum.
- **2019 Haldane Middle School and the Early Education Center Mindful Swim Day!** Middle schoolers from Haldane paired up with our Early Education Class to talk about mindfulness, water safety and swim instruction.
- Successful completion of the **2019-2020 Early Education program**. This individualized social emotional learning-based curriculum was designed to help our babies and younger children to play freely while being supported psychologically and socially in a safe and structured environment.
- 2019-2020 **Mindful Swim program** completed
- The continued partnership with the **Putnam County Department of Health** allowed for the children to be evaluated by a county nurse on a regular basis. Future goals and developmental markers were outlined, and a curriculum was developed for the specific child. The Early Education center focused on and implemented the recommendations into the individualized curriculum.
- **CPR training** was completed by staff and certain older children.
- **Junior Lifeguard Classes 2019-2020** completed by the Homeschool Academy attendees.
- **Lifeguard Classes 2020** completed by certain staff and children.
- Provided supervision and training to three advanced social work students from **New York University and Fordham University**.
- Completed successful **art program** with a focus on trauma informed teachings/skills.
- **Boys Social Skills group-** Focused on specific skills for middle school boys that develop their confidence and help them with their interpersonal relationships.

- Continued **Animal Assisted therapy and activities** including continuing a therapeutic class where our Saint Basil Academy children help our facility's emotional support dog, Mr. Rufus Basil learn basic manners and commands.
- **Executive Functioning Group** designed to help boys with ADHD/ADD: Provided specific support to help organize and develop organizational skills for our school aged boys who are struggling with academic and residential tasks due to processing and focus issues.
- Formalized early **Childhood Sibling Therapy Sessions** (clinician and intern) to promote attachment and connectivity in the siblings in the residential and family program.
- Provided **mindfulness sessions for the early education and Homeschool Academy** by providing daily sessions to help young children learn to unwind and connect with their bodies. Sessions involved activities and discussion of feelings within the mind and body.
- Provided college/career planning for our children (ongoing), pre and post high school, as they transition to early adulthood.
- Created ongoing school curriculum for the homeschool program and the early education class.
- **Just BEing Human** curriculum unveiled and implemented. The Just BEing human project is designed to help children who have been through trauma understand that tough times do not discriminate. In the Just BEing human video series, children partner with celebrities and together they share stories of humanity and resilience. (Because of COVID and the OCFS standards, we were not able to bring outsiders/guests on campus. We hope to continue when we have approval and when it is safe to do so.)

