

# Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

Biennial Convention: July 6 - 9, 2014  
Philadelphia, PA

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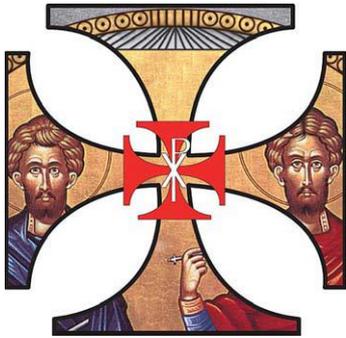
## Chapter Challenge

**Metropolis:** San Francisco

**Chapter Name:** Saint Sophia

**Project Title:** Soles for Needy Souls

**Project Summary:** Our project started back in February of 2013. We were fortunate to be connected with FOCUS North America (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve) through the help of a good friend. Shortly afterwards, FOCUS was given 200,000 pairs of new shoes by a major American Shoe Company to distribute to needy school children of all ages throughout the country. Due to the many impoverished children in Southern California, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties received half of the allotment for the entire U.S. Since this was such a large undertaking, Jacob Lee of FOCUS and several of our board members met to discuss spearheading "Operation Lace Up". We were going to coordinate and recruit volunteers to unload, sort and prepare for distribution the many thousand pairs of shoes. By September we also helped to deliver and fit children with shoes at various schools. To see all the happy and grateful little faces was a heartwarming experience for all those who participated.



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To carry this rewarding experience further... our next idea was to get shoes to the homeless people closer to our own community. One of our presenters for a General Meeting was Dr. Nikos Stefanidis, a parishioner of Saint Sophia Cathedral. Dr. Nick has a group of professional people who travel with him out to the streets of Hollywood to minister to the homeless and to young people who have run away from abusive home lives. Over the years we have collected items such as blankets, underwear and toiletries for these needy souls. Since we had been working with FOCUS to bring shoes to needy students, we thought that we could have a luncheon after church to be provided by our chapter in order to collect shoes and socks for the homeless on the streets of Hollywood.

The idea was simple. Instead of asking for a monetary donation, just bring a pair of shoes - or some packages of socks - for the "price of admission" to the luncheon. This involves the entire church community along with their children to learn about caring for others by doing some of the 'work' themselves. Certainly it would have been easy for Philoptochos to just write a check to Dr. Stefanidis' outreach group and let them do the shopping, but that was not the point here. The idea was to get the community and Philoptochos ladies involved as well. In this way we are not only teaching our children and grandchildren, but other members of our parish that we need to reach out - and help those in our neighboring communities. This is also a good way to get other women involved who do not have the time to do more of our work-intensive projects because they have children at home or other work commitments. Our event, "Soles for Needy Souls" , is planned for Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup>.

We are also in the process of organizing groups to prepare food for these needy and homeless souls. Helping others, as Jesus has commanded His followers, is not only rewarding but it helps to bring communities closer. This work is the true meaning of Philoptochos.