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Greek Orthodox Women in the United States Prepare, Serve 750,000 Meals to Hungry Across the United States, Greece

BY GREGORY PAPPAS ON AUGUST 5, 2016

DIASPORA, GREEK AMERICA, PHILANTHROPY

As the philanthropic arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society has a track record of over 85 years of philanthropy through a multitude of programs that make a difference in the lives of people in the United States and throughout the world. It's in their name, after all— founded to be the “friends of the poor.”

The Feeding the Hungry program began as part of National Philoptochos President Maria Logus' goal of “doing more doing — more hands-on philanthropy, engaging all members of our community in our work.”

Although this program is new on the national level, it has always been going on the chapter level, in the local parish communities throughout the nation. In early 2015, the newly appointed President challenged chapters across the country to prepare and offer 250,000 meals by the National Philoptochos Biennial Convention in Nashville, in July 2016.

“Philoptochos has a long tradition of generosity and charity. Today we seek to add to that, with emphasis on hands-on philanthropy— and including families and friends in our efforts,” President Logus said.

To begin, Georgia Vlitaz, Chair of the Feeding the Hungry Committee, reached out to chapters for information on their established programs to find out where, when, how often, and with how many volunteers they did the work.

Some chapters cooked and served the homeless and hungry at their church halls, and some partnered with community based organizations in soup kitchens and on city streets. This information was shared with chapters seeking to start a new program or to improve or broaden an existing one.

Over the months, chapters in San Luis Obispo, Calif., Hartford, Ct., Charlotte, N.C. and St. Louis, Mo., among many, many others provided updates on meals served. The Committee created a monthly program near Penn Station in New York City that invites a rotating group of local chapters to participate in providing home cooked meals, socks, toiletries and snacks to those in need.

Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, the Spiritual Advisor to Philoptochos, participates regularly and provides spiritual comfort to the guests at the New York City location.

At the recently concluded Convention in Nashville, delegates from Philoptochos, in addition to those at the concurrent Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congress, rolled up their sleeves and donned hairnets to assemble 25,000 meals in partnership with Feeding Children Everywhere, an organization that provides materials to package individual nutritious meals.

The meals were donated to organizations for hungry children in Nashville and Greece.

The number brought the total meals prepared and served to over 750,000, tripling the original goal.

“The challenge was generously and fervently supported by so many chapters and members, that it met and far exceeded our aspirations to help those in need,” said President Logus. “This inspires us to continue and to do even more.”

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society is the philanthropic arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America with 26,000 members nationwide. Philoptochos responds immediately to needs and crises and its philanthropic outreach extends to each area of the country and throughout the world. In 2015, National Philoptochos distributed \$1.74 million in philanthropic aid.