



PHILOPTOCHOS FINDS NEW WAYS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR SAINT NICHOLAS INITIATIVE



Two events held in April 2015 netted over \$40,000 for the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center. Philoptochos chapters planned events that would be successful in their local communities.

The Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos Board took advantage of the proximity of their many chapters to sponsor an Agape Dinner, "*Relight, Rebuild and Resurrect,*" at Fountain Blue Banquets. The greater Chicago community came out in force to support the cause and make a difference in the world. The evening's events featured a combination dinner and reverse raffle, with delicious food, homemade sweets and wonderful fellowship.

Metropolis Board members Pam Argyris, Marilyn Tzakis and Pat Gerbanas served as Co-Chairs of this fun filled event, with all Metropolis Board members participating in different capacities as committee members. Angelo and Juliana Mourelatos, the emcees, entertained the guests during the reverse raffle for which 289 tickets were sold.

The highlight of the evening was the announcement that Annunciation Philoptochos Chapter of Kankakee, IL, one of the smallest chapters in the Metropolis, won the \$3,000 grand prize, a portion of which the chapter donated back to the event proceeds. The Metropolis hopes the funds will help this small chapter to grow and flourish.

The evening was a resounding success, as net profits exceeded \$20,000, with everyone in attendance contributing to help *Relight, Rebuild and Resurrect* St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center.

A single chapter, St. Xenia Philoptochos Society of Ss. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Reading, PA, held a very different, yet equally successful, event. St. Xenia Philoptochos sponsored a benefit concert at the Miller Center for the Arts. A committee of 20 women led by Co-Chairs Despina Denne, Chapter President, Ann Kraras and Sharon Whitman planned the event, which featured internationally acclaimed artists Maria Asteriadou, pianist, and her husband Kurt Nikkanen, violinist. Both are graduates of The Juilliard School and residents of New York City. The remarkable pair, who donated their time and talent for the fundraiser, treated their audience to an extraordinary musical *journey through time*, which included compositions by Bach, Schubert, Yannis Constantinidis, and Gershwin.

Excellent organization and advance planning were the keys to success. The Miller Center sent information to its entire subscription list. The committee placed brochures and posters in strategic locations throughout the Reading community in churches, schools and universities, musical organizations, and the Fraternal Orders of Police and Firefighters. The event was advertised in the local press, and interviews with the artists and committee chairs appeared in newspapers one week before the event. Local businesses were tapped for donations and sponsorships.

The ticket for the evening included a *Meet-the-Artists* reception with wine and hors d'oeuvres directly following the concert. To commemorate the occasion, the chapter commissioned a local hot glass artist to create a contemporary plate, which was inscribed and presented to the performers. The event raised over \$21,000, more than doubling the committee's initial goal. The success of the event was due in large part to the support received from outside the Greek Orthodox Community.

The St. Nicholas Fund Raising Initiative gives Philoptochos chapters the unique opportunity to reach outside of their parishes into their communities at large. Rebuilding Ground Zero is a cause that resonates with Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, a cause that unites our entire nation.