



Direct Archdiocesan District Philoptochos

“Panaghia Perivleptos”

St. Sophia Church in Albany, NY is part of the Direct Archdiocesan District of the Ladies Philoptochos Society. We were assigned the awesome task of the Chapter Challenge when I attended the 2012 Clergy/Laity Philoptochos Convention in Phoenix, AZ. I had just become President of our Albany Chapter plus this was my first time attending this type of conference. Reflecting on this experience gave me the excitement to return home and share this rewarding time with fellow Philoptochos friends.

It didn't take long for our challenge to become two-fold. There are three Greek Orthodox Churches in our local area with separate relatively small Philoptochos Chapters in close proximity. My goal was to reach out to St. George Philoptochos in Schenectady and St. Basil Philoptochos in Troy to work together with Albany on this project. St. Sophia has a knitting group that meets on a weekly basis with all products donated to local charities. We invited St. George and St. Basil Philoptochos friends to join us. The outcome was a wonderful group of women working together towards a common goal – the **Chapter Challenge**. We then created the “Capital Area Philoptochos Society”.

After searching out several suggestions for a project, it was obvious a new endeavor at the City Mission of Schenectady, the Career Training Center, was a perfect choice. This organization epitomizes the mission of Philoptochos as “Friends of the Poor”. The City Mission exists to meet the needs of the hungry and homeless of our community not only by providing emergency food and shelter, but by working to help people get out of poverty and give back to the community. Their goal for this center is to equip clients with marketable skills for today's work force and establish a healthy work ethic. Many staff members are former clients who have bettered themselves as a result of going to the City Mission. This Training Center in a refurbished thrift store houses classrooms, offices, a training room with computer stations, a reception area, a small chapel and a clothing room to help outfit clients with appropriate work attire. We set out to raise enough money to purchase 8 computers for this center. We recently learned our contributions to the Career Training Center provided additional benefits to the City Mission.

Our first fundraiser was marketing ruffle scarves handmade by “The Knitters of St. Sophia”. After a very short period of time, every place we went we saw our beautiful scarves in many lovely colors adorning the necks of our supporters. Orders kept increasing.

At the same time, Faith Takes, an Albany parishioner and owner of Empire Education which includes Mildred Elley Business School and Austin Beauty School furthered our challenge project by offering to “match” up to \$5,000.

This progressed into several craft fairs offering handmade items from our talented women. The Schenectady Chapter opened their own “Philoptochos Boutique” which featured the same ruffle scarves along with handmade knit and crocheted items made by their members. The Boutique was open to parishioners every Sunday at Coffee Hour and also at their annual Greek Festival. In addition, the Schenectady ladies tirelessly made 500 Easter breads to sell as a fund raiser for the Chapter Challenge.

The Troy Chapter began making their own ruffle scarves for sale and held other events in support of the Chapter Challenge. Meanwhile at St. Sophia, a Greek Café was offered at a local quilt show. Many events were planned with all proceeds benefiting our Chapter Challenge project. Personal donations were also made.

In a very short period of time our combined efforts raised \$5,000 which was matched by the Faith Takes Foundation, meeting our goal of \$10,000.

Much to our astonishment, the efforts of our dedicated Philoptochos members, supporters and parishioners resulted in a final donation in excess of \$14,000 which greatly surpassed our first goal. In addition to the original 8 computers planned, we also made it possible for the purchase of projectors and flat screen monitors throughout the Career Training Center.

We further our efforts by working on projects at the City Mission including Weekend Blessings (offering food for needy children to take home for weekends), a Christmas toy drive and Toy Store, Greek Cooking Classes, and clothing collections. A Schenectady parishioner will offer a landscaping project once the Center is established.

Today we continue our commitment to this Chapter Challenge by working with the City Mission. We wouldn't have molded our three Philoptochos Chapters to work together, we wouldn't have been aware of the good deeds of the City Mission of Schenectady and most of all we wouldn't have “Made a Difference” in the Capital District Area of New York State had we not come together to meet this “Challenge”.

Submitted by
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