



Philanthropy Witness



The Official Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society

December 2015/January 2016



+ ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS
OF AMERICA

Christmas, 2015

*Christ, having no flesh, He purposely assumes it for our sake.
He Who is becomes what He never was.
He shares our substance without forsaking His own nature.
Desiring to make us citizens of the world on high,
Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, is born on earth as a man.
Nativity Matins, Hymn, Kathisma 3*

Dear Miss Logus, Members of the National Board,
and Ladies of Philoptochos,

In the wonder of God's love, all that had been promised by God, all that had been foretold for our salvation, was fulfilled in the birth of Christ. Ever giving thanks to Him, may we offer all our being for His glory and service, sharing in the life, love, and peace that will be ours for eternity.

I convey to you and your loved ones my best wishes for a truly blessed Christmas and New Year 2016 filled with God's loving and saving presence in the midst of our world.

With paternal love in Christ,

Archbishop Demetrios of America

Christmas 2015

His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela

My beloved Philoptochos Ladies,

As we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, His holy Epiphany and welcome the New Year, I want to wish each and every one of you, your families and your loved ones, a blessed Holiday Season and a joyous, healthy and full of love New Year.

God has given us the privilege to follow in His footsteps and to be messengers of love, giving, caring and joy. May we continue this blessed ministry in the New Year with more vigor, humility and love, touching lives and leading them to the Lord, the true Source and example of Love.

In the love of the incarnated Lord,

Bishop Sevastianos

+Bishop Sevastianos

Christmas 2015

Maria Logus, National Philoptochos President

To the members of the National and Metropolis Philoptochos Boards, Chapter Presidents and Stewards:

As we celebrate the glorious Feast of the Nativity, I thank you for your dedication, your support and your friendship. I wish you, your families and your friends, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

To read the full message from President Logus, please go to: <http://tinyurl.com/pqps84>



Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center

Jennifer Constantin ~ Arlene Siavelis Kehl ~
Anne Michals, Co-Chairs

Throughout its existence, Philoptochos has faithfully supported our Greek Orthodox Church in raising funds for its Mission, including the groundbreaking initiatives and historical projects that resonate throughout the Greek Orthodox community.

Both large and small fundraising efforts are taking place across the country to help bring about the fulfillment of an appeal by His Eminence Geron Archbishop Demetrios of America to raise funds for the new Saint Nicholas building project.

In the Metropolis of Denver, Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church and Assumption of the Theotokos Cathedral of Denver joined together to dedicate Sunday, September 27, to raise funds for the Saint Nicholas project. Permission was granted for both parish communities to celebrate Divine Liturgy together at the Cathedral. All parish organizations, including Philoptochos, Parish Councils, Choirs and GOYA, committed themselves to the effort. As the clergy and choirs served together for the glorious celebrations Philoptochos and Parish Councils sponsored the coffee hour and all monies raised through the sale of candles and trays were dedicated to the building project.



Saint Andrew Philoptochos of Chicago held a Saint Nicholas fundraiser that included an architectural cruise through Chicago.

In the Metropolis of Chicago, the Saint Andrew Philoptochos of Chicago organized an event that was held after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, October 4, in support of the Saint Nicholas project. A delicious luncheon, donated by a local

restaurateur, followed by a downtown cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady's Cruise Boat, became a day of fun and devotion for those who participated. A docent of the Chicago Architectural Foundation served as an expert guide, while the cruise ship made its way past many historic sites. All proceeds from the event were earmarked to benefit the Saint Nicholas project.



Replica of St. Nicholas inspires donations at Holy Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Brookville, Long Island, New York.

In the Direct Archdiocesan District, to promote fundraising efforts through individual donors, a Philoptochos member of Holy Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Brookville, Long Island, New York, crafted a replica of Saint Nicholas Church and Shrine. Donations, both large and small, make their way into the replica of Saint Nicholas, which acts as an inspirational reminder of the support needed to bring to life the Church and Shrine.

Standing as remarkable examples of Christian stewards, at the forefront of fundraising efforts that have directly impacted people of faith, has been the signature of the members of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society. Nestled in between places of business and public buildings, the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, facing east as every Greek Orthodox Church does, will be a beacon of Orthodox Christianity at the World Trade Center site.

To be a part of the Philoptochos fundraising Initiative, please donate directly to your local Philoptochos Chapter or your Metropolis Philoptochos.

National Biennial Convention 2016

Irene Arsoniadis and Theone Dickos
Co-Chairs

Dazzling in Nashville is what Philoptochos will be for the 2016 National Philoptochos Convention. The venue has been set: **Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville**; the date is in place: **July 3-7th**, Committees are in position and at work. All that is missing is: **YOU**. Momentum is building for an action packed week filled with interactive workshops, time to connect with Philoptochos sisters from across the nation, and brainstorming ideas to bring back to your own Philoptochos Chapter.

One of the many highlights for the week will be the **AGAPE AWARDS**. Each Philoptochos chapter has the opportunity to nominate an outstanding member who exemplifies the true Philoptochos spirit of chapter and community. An **AGAPE AWARD** winner from each Metropolis will be recognized for how her actions have lead and inspired others. So, start thinking of that special lady who has made a difference in your community.

The new National "Feed the Hungry" program will be showcased throughout the week. Each chapter has been challenged by National Philoptochos President Maria Logus to reach out and provide meals to the less fortunate. The anticipation is growing to see if we have met our goal – with the answer to be revealed at the convention. President Logus will share her own personal experience and involvement with this worthy program.

Additionally, each Metropolis will be presenting their Chapter Challenge. One chapter in every Metropolis was selected at the 2014 Convention by their Philoptochos Metropolis president to pursue a new outreach program. The selected chapter will enlighten the delegates on their project, while demonstrating how each of us could implement this in our own community.

Time is ticking and the Metropolis of Detroit Philoptochos, our host, is eagerly waiting to welcome you. Plans for a riveting cultural event for Philoptochos delegates are in motion. Registration materials and other need-to-know information will make its way to you soon. So, save the date, brush

off your cowboy boots, and start your planning now so you won't miss out on the 2016 Convention!

* Please note that the Grand Banquet will be held on July 7, so you may want to plan your return travel on July 8.

Hands-On Philanthropy for Philoptochos

Georgia Vlitras, Chair

It has been 11 months since National Philoptochos President Maria Logus announced the back-to-basics/hands-on-philanthropy focus and the Feeding the Hungry program. At that time, President Logus issued a challenge to all our chapters. The challenge was for Philoptochos to provide a total of 250,000 meals from January 2015 to the National Philoptochos Biennial Convention in July 2016.

The updates we have been receiving from chapters have been interesting and gratifying. Their ministries can be put into three groups:

1. Chapters that provide meals at their church
2. Chapters that have teamed up with existing community-based programs by either:
 - Preparing the meal at their church and then transporting to the facility or;
 - Preparing and serving at the facility
3. Starting a program based on our President's goal

On a national level, the National Board members from the Direct Archdiocesan District and New Jersey along with local chapters are providing meals for the hungry on the streets of Manhattan. On the last Tuesday of each month, they are serving a warm meal, sandwiches, snacks, fruit, and drinks to approximately 110 guests. The meal is sometimes prepared at our Philoptochos Center of Philanthropy and other times donated by chapters or individuals and brought to the Center to be packaged.

If one were to visit the Center on the last Tuesday of the month, one would see the Center buzzing with an assembly line of women making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, preparing food on the stove, assembling personal hygiene kits and arranging packing boxes, bins, coffee cups, lids, etc. for transportation. It's an "all hands on deck" kind of day. And as we are getting our cars ready, the ever-present Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, our Spiritual Advisor, arrives to help. Whatever the need, he is always there!

Once we reach our location, the tables come out, the items are placed into their "spots" and the night begins. Our guests are glad to see us and excited to learn what the "menu" is for the evening. They are always gracious and thankful and although there have been nights that we've been really hot, or cold and wet, the feeling we come away with is *blessed*, for making a difference for at least that night.

On our website, www.philoptochos.org, go to "Feeding the Hungry: 250,000 Meals" via the left sidebar and you can see our feature "Spotlight on...." where we have been sharing the work being done by chapters throughout the country. It is so exciting to receive and publish this information with photographs, too!



As far as the challenge of providing 250,000 meals goes, by mid December we had reached 190,000 meals. If you have information you would like to share with us, please go to our section on the website and find the email address of the liaison for your Metropolis.

*Do You Know What We Do?
A Message to our Chapters*

Barbara Pasis

PR/Communications Committee Co-Chair

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

...Matthew 5:14-16



It is a common refrain: "What does Philoptochos actually *do*?" This comment has been a source of angst to me for the past 10 years. After all, Philoptochos disburses **\$1.5 million in philanthropy every year**, both nationally and internationally – and these are only the funds that are disbursed from the National Board. Imagine if we tracked and included Metropolis and local chapter philanthropy! During the past 10 years, Philoptochos Chapters via the National have provided:

- Emergency Response assistance to victims of disasters: 9/11, the Greek Fires, the Asian Tsunami, floods in Tennessee and the Midwest, earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, fires in California, typhoon in the Philippines, and first response on the ground during Hurricane Katrina providing clean drinking water before the Red Cross.
- Funding, and working with IOCC and private donors, have built two children's medical clinics in Africa, one in Ethiopia and one in Zimbabwe. These clinics provide free medical services and education to children, and particularly, to HIV and AIDS-infected orphans.
- Wheelchairs and other assistive mobility devices to Thessaloniki, Greece and the Republic of Georgia.
- Continued support during the recent crisis in Greece and Cyprus.
- Social service support to needy families across our nation.

- Over \$3 million in funding since 1989 through the Children's Medical Fund Luncheon for children's hospitals and medical, as well as universities and special programs that serve the needs of ill and fragile children, along with their families.
- Meals, warm clothing and comfort to the hungry and homeless across our nation, culminating in President Logus' challenge to chapters to serve 250,000 Meals across America between January 2015 and July 2016.
- Tutoring, books, school supplies and lunches to children in schools in underserved areas through our Literacy Program.
- Greeting cards and care packages to our troops overseas, and welcome home kits to provide assistance and comfort when they return home.
- Orthodox Christian Fellowship Connect Kits to help college students remain connected to our faith.
- Environmental programs
- HIV/AIDS walk-a-thons
- Dress for Success program
- Emergency Health kits for distribution by IOCC and FEMA
- Afghans for shut-ins, hospital patients and newborns
- Human Trafficking initiative
- Support for our Ministries and Commitments: Saint Basil Academy, Hellenic College/Holy Cross, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Saint Photios Shrine, InterOrthodox Christian Charities, Orthodox Christian Mission Center and Support-A-Mission Priest, Orthodox Christian Fellowship, 75th Anniversary Founders Fund (supporting older adults), Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres Benevolent Fund, National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Benevolent Fund, UNICEF, Autism Assistance
- Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine Initiative

Calling All Philoptochos Bloggers!

After years spent trying to determine why, despite the enormity of our good works, no one seems to know what we do and agonizing over what we can do about it, I arrived at a simple conclusion: **It's really our own fault.** The last sentence in our Mission Statement is: *The charitable work of the Society shall be performed with discretion, courtesy and kindness.* We take this charge very seriously and help the needy privately, humbly and with no fanfare. We don't talk about what we do. Moreover, rather than publicize our philanthropy, we write articles about social events and publish photos of luncheons and banquets. It is no surprise, therefore, that most people believe we are a social organization that does some charity work, rather than a serious philanthropic organization.

Thus, we must change our approach. In order to be worthy of the continued support of our benefactors, in order to expand our philanthropy, we must show them what we do. We must not be afraid to talk about our philanthropy. Although we will never discuss names of families that we help within our local parishes, we can report that last month we assisted "x" number of families totaling "x" dollars. We can write articles about the hands-on philanthropy we perform in conjunction with our Sunday Schools, GOYAs and other groups within our parishes and include photos of the work as we are doing it.

This new public relations philosophy will require the cooperation of all of our chapters and members. All Philoptochos members must be ambassadors of our message and spread the news of our good works within our communities and parishes. The scope of our philanthropy is astounding. All Greek Orthodox faithful need to be aware of what we do.

*"You are the light of the world...
Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works and
glorify your Father in heaven."*

Help us to promote our message. Send articles and photos of your philanthropic projects and hands-on work to: communications@philoptochos.org

Together, we can make a difference.



Here is a friendly tip for all Philoptochos members!

Take 20 minutes from your busy schedule (yes, you can find the time!) and read the Philoptochos blogspot.

It is so simple! Go to www.philoptochos.org and on the home page, click on "Blogger" on the left-hand sidebar. Start reading! You will not be disappointed.

The Communications Committee has received some wonderful blog entries from Philoptochos women throughout the country. We are working hard to solicit and encourage more members to participate.

The entry requirements, which are listed on the blogspot, are simple and painless. One requirement is that your blog entry has a Philoptochos thread or connection. It should be about 300 words or so.

With over 26,000 members, there are at least 26,000 Philoptochos stories!

We want to hear YOUR story and we want to share it with all Philoptochos members. Someone out there is waiting to be inspired by you! Yes, you can do this!

New Members for Philoptochos
Alexis Limberakis & Maria Tamvakologos
Co-Chairs

As we approach our January Membership Drive, it is important to understand our roles as members of Philoptochos, to increase membership in our chapters. We must all be ambassadors of Philoptochos and be active participants in bringing the message and mission of our organization, to all our Greek Orthodox sisters in Christ. It's the responsibility of everyone- Executive Boards, Chapter Presidents, Board Members, Membership Chairs, AND anyone who is committed to our purpose of helping those in need.

You may ask "why me?" The question to ask yourself is "why not me?" Who better to share the good works of Philoptochos than those who are a part of the "army of women" as we have been described by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios.

If each active member of Philoptochos brought in even just one new member, our membership numbers would double. Remember, there is power in numbers!

Now you may ask, "How can I bring in new members?" One idea would be to give a gift of membership to someone, such as a daughter, daughter-in-law, Goddaughter, family member, new bride, new parishioner, etc. The gift of a Philoptochos membership will give the recipient the opportunity to learn and become involved in the dynamic and life changing work of Philoptochos.

A second very easy way to help membership grow is to simply ask a fellow parishioner, friend or relative if they are a member of Philoptochos. If they are not, invite them to join! Ask them to help you with something your chapter is involved in. Let them see all that Philoptochos does and the wonderful fellowship that is created by working together.

Another critical aspect of membership is retaining members. If you haven't seen a Philoptochos sister for a while, give her a call to see how she is and if there is a reason she hasn't been participating. Invite her to join you at a meeting, activity or event.

It is imperative for all members to be visible, approachable and enthusiastic ambassadors of Philoptochos.

As current members, we should all be actively engaged and committed to promoting: *Philoptochos is Philanthropy, Fellowship, Faith in Action*. Make membership and recruitment part of your work.

Membership committees can come up with ideas and suggestions, but the best tool for membership growth and to spreading the word, is still **our own members**, at every level!

We should all be committed to being representatives of Philoptochos and invite, other Greek Orthodox women to join us. The personal face to face approach is still the most effective way to bring in new members. We are all sisters in Philoptochos, with love, compassion and the desire to help others in our hearts, and should be the avenue to invite others to do the same. Let's not keep Philoptochos a secret!

National Philoptochos Board Fall Meeting
Brookline, Massachusetts

The Fall meeting of the National Philoptochos Board was held on Friday, October 30, 2015 in Brookline, Massachusetts in the Archbishop Iakovos Library located on the campus of Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America joined the meeting and addressed the National Board on a number of topics including his recent visit with Pope Francis I at the Ground Zero Memorial, the work of IOCC in Syria and his visit to Greece that included a tour of an after-school center for children.

President Logus updated the Board on recent news, including the plan to expand the Feeding the Hungry Initiative at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New York on Thanksgiving Day.

Committees gave reports on their recent work. In their update of initiatives to support the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, Committee Tri-Chairs Jennifer Constantin, Arlene Siavelis Kehl and Anne Michals reported a

recent large contribution, and announced the presentation of a check for \$400,000 to His Eminence Geron Archbishop Demetrios as part of the National Philoptochos pledge for the building of the church and shrine.

The National Board voted upon and approved the following disbursements, totaling \$515,027, resulting from the good works of Philoptochos chapters nationwide.

- St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine \$400,000
- International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) for aid to Greece \$50,000
- Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres Benevolent Fund (RCA) \$25,000
- Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) \$20,000
- International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) for Nepal Disaster Relief \$12,527
- Hellenicare for Aid to Armenia & Georgia \$5,000
- Shepherd's Centers of America (SCA) for Meals on Wheels (MOW) \$2,500

Anita Kartalopoulos, Make a Difference Day Chair, presented slides of Philoptochos chapters from across the country engaged in "good deeds" with children and adult parishioners, kicking off the launch of a Philoptochos initiative to celebrate national "Make a Difference Day" every October, in honor of the name day of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios.

Georgia Vlitas gave a report on "Feeding the Hungry." Philoptochos members around the country had already served and/or prepared more than 160,000 meals since this initiative was inaugurated. His Grace Bishop Sevastianos of Zela joined the presentation, stating that his participation in this program had changed his life.

Elizabeth St. Pierre, Manager of Fisher House Boston, spoke as a guest of New Initiatives Co-Chairs Katherine Siavelis and Peggy Vranas. With locations across the country and in Europe, Fisher House provides free temporary lodging to family members of hospitalized veterans and military members, creating a healing environment for our heroes in their time of need.

A report was given by members of the Metropolis of Boston Philoptochos about their Veterans Project. Chapters join together to provide household cleaners, dishes, blankets, sheets, silverware and many other everyday items to veterans and their families as they move into a new home.

Nick Mavricks, from the Orthodox Christian Network, presented on the new partnership between Philoptochos and OCN. In this partnership, OCN will use its tremendous social media resources to help spread the word about the work, projects and philanthropy of Philoptochos to its worldwide audience.

Metropolis of Boston Philoptochos President Fran Levas presented a report on the Children's Medical Fund Luncheon, for which she is Chair, taking place on Saturday, October 31st. Over 650 tickets had been sold and ten CMF grants would be awarded for a total of \$167,000.

Anita Kartolopoulos reported on the progress of maintenance work being done at the Center of Philanthropy.

The National Philoptochos will return to Nashville, Tennessee for the biennial convention on July 3-7, 2016 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, in conjunction with the 43rd Biennial Clergy Laity Congress. Newly appointed convention Co-Chairs Theone Dickos and Irene Arsoniadis (who wore a cowboy hat to in honor of the host city) announced the appointment of convention subcommittees.

Vickie Scaljon spoke on the Aid to Greece and Cyprus Campaign, asking all present to encourage greatly needed support of this humanitarian relief effort. Moved by a desire to take up an immediate collection for this cause, board members literally passed the cowboy hat around the room and collected over \$4,000.

President Logus announced that the next National Philoptochos Board meeting would take place in February, 2016 in Houston, Texas.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with a closing prayer.

This Year Is UNICEF 70th Anniversary!
DECEMBER IS PHILOPTOCHOS
UNICEF MONTH!
Ourania Soumas, Chair



One of the Philoptochos December chapter commitments is the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

Philoptochos chapters have supported the work of UNICEF since 1979-- the United Nation's "International Year of the Child"-- when Philoptochos was designated a Non-Governmental Organization, working with the United Nations and with UNICEF.

Philoptochos donations help this global organization protect the rights, health and well-being of children worldwide. In 2014, Philoptochos donated \$30,000 to help prevent human trafficking. In the ten-year period from 2005 through 2014, Philoptochos donated \$235,000 to UNICEF.

The Philoptochos UNICEF Committee recognizes that because of the tremendous increase in world problems that affect children, particularly the horrors of child trafficking, child pornography and illegal child labor, the needs of UNICEF have multiplied.

The committee believes that besides making valuable and much-appreciated financial contributions to UNICEF, the time has come for a more "hands on" involvement. Consequently, we are working to reach out and actively involve ourselves in this cause.

Just recently, I attended the annual meeting of the Committee of Interfaith Leaders and the Child Protection Team of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. A panel of expert leaders from both groups discussed the role of faith-based communities, such as Philoptochos, in addressing the issue of "Ending Violence against Children and Human Trafficking" locally, but with global impact.

Discussion included the human rights of children versus the known abuses such as incest, lack of birth registrations, gender inequality, forced child soldiers, forced child marriages, controlling children by drugging them, no schooling, on-line advertising of vulnerable children and more.

The panel spoke of several action steps for organizations like ours, recommended films to view at meetings and discussed our partnering with UNICEF USA.

A UNICEF representative will be helping the committee to develop opportunities for our chapters to be tangibly engaged in addressing the issue of human trafficking.

General Medical Fund

The December Ministry Commitment of the General Medical Fund (GMF) was established in response to the need to provide assistance in connection with illnesses not specifically covered by other restricted National Philoptochos funds or programs.

Since its inception in 2007, almost \$265,000 has been donated through the GMF to various organizations and assistance to individuals through Social Services.

None of this assistance would have been possible without your chapter's generosity. If you have not done so already, kindly submit your commitment for the General Medical Fund. If you have already done so, thank you, as your contribution is a significant way for us to respond to those in need.

Vasilopita - A Beautiful Tradition
Joanne Stavrakas and Kalli Tsitsipas, Co-Chairs

In January, Philoptochos chapters across the Archdiocese host Vasilopita events in honor of Saint Basil the Great, to benefit Saint Basil Academy in Garrison, New York.

One of the most beautiful and inspiring traditions of our Greek Orthodox Church is the observance of Vasilopita in Saint Basil's honor. A most wise and compassionate clergyman, Saint Basil was the first person in history to establish a home for children. His feast day combines the cheer and happiness of the New Year with the glory of the birth of Christ and the Epiphany, into what is known in our Orthodox Church as the *Vasilopita Observance*, symbolizing the joy of life everlasting.

Following in the footsteps of Saint Basil, for over 70 years Philoptochos has helped to nurture the children of the Academy by providing a warm, loving and secure "home" under the guidance of our Archdiocese. The Saint Basil Academy grounds and buildings belong to the Philoptochos. Your consistent generosity provides for the care of precious lives, and maintenance of the entire facility.

At Saint Basil Academy, each child is cared for, loved and made to feel part of a family. They thrive spiritually and academically, gain maturity and grow to be responsible adults. Philoptochos sisters and gracious donors across our Archdiocese help to provide the children with comforts that every child deserves. If you are able to visit, you will witness the love and nurturing provided by Fr. Costas Sitaras and the staff, on the face of every child.

Children can be confidentially referred to Saint Basil Academy by contacting your Priest or calling Saint Basil Academy at 845-424-3500. It is our moral responsibility to help children who could benefit from this ministry.

A heartfelt thank you to all who have contributed. In 2015, \$300,000 was donated and in the ten year period between 2005 and 2014, \$3,505,000 was donated to Saint Basil Academy from the Vasilopita Event.

Please mail your Vasilopita contributions to the National Philoptochos, 126 East 37th Street, New York, NY 10016.

Social Services Fund
Cancer and Other Major Illness Fund
Paulette Geanacopoulos, LMSW
Director, Department of Social Work
National Philoptochos

Since 1987, the National Philoptochos Office has assisted members of the Orthodox Christian community in the United States through its Department of Social Services. A vital component of the Society, our mission is to improve the quality of life of those in need in a way that maintains their dignity and self-respect. Through confidential and professional services provided by a New York State licensed Social Worker (the state in which Philoptochos is incorporated), we provide direct services including outreach, education and information; interim case management and supportive counseling; referrals to local and broader resources, and advocacy to ensure persons obtain what is rightfully theirs; and, training and technical assistance services to strengthen the ability of our affiliates to provide social services locally within their own communities.

Our ability to "*raise money to give money to individuals and families in need*" sets us apart from most other nonprofit organizations. The financial grants are provided to Orthodox Christians regardless of their immigration status, as long as the services rendered – housing, medical, etc. – are provided in the United States. Our financial grants prevent evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut-offs; assist victims of intimate partner abuse and their children to relocate to safe environments; authorize emergency fuel deliveries to ensure families who have exhausted other resources have heat and hot water; offer relief towards food and other daily living needs; and contribute to funeral arrangements to guarantee that our indigent neighbors receive an Orthodox Christian burial.

As uncovered health care costs continue to be a major issue for Americans, and through its **Cancer and Other Major Medical Fund**, Philoptochos contributes to **out-of-pocket medical expenses**

including but not limited to health insurance premiums, co-payments and deductibles. Through these grants, we enable those with life-threatening illnesses to focus on their health rather than their many financial challenges.

With referrals from a broad network including hospitals and other institutions, medical examiners and social service agencies, as well as from those within our Church network, our services reach nearly **200 different individuals and families each year** from every Metropolis in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. It is significant to point out that only 25% - 30% of the annual number of cases we assist request or require financial assistance. Awarded within the parameters of Philoptochos guidelines, the Department of Social Services has awarded over **\$800,000 in financial grants over the past five years** on behalf of our clients. Many of these grants supplement assistance provided at the local and Metropolis levels.

Because of each chapter's generosity, understanding of and commitment to the mission of the Department of Social Services, we are able to give Orthodox Christians in need some breathing space while we help them develop the skills and resources to manage on their own. As a result, our work builds and rebuilds futures, and, perhaps most importantly, our work provides spiritual support that lets members of our community know they are not alone.

Aid to Greece and Cyprus



For more than eight decades, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, through the generosity of our chapters and members, has faithfully responded to those in need and suffering – wherever and whenever the need arises

When the financial crisis in Greece and Cyprus

came to the world's attention, our hearts immediately turned to our brothers and sisters in our ancestral homes. Sadly today, after years of recession and record unemployment, Greece still faces constant pain and challenges as it seeks to honor its debts and commitments. With an economy that has been reduced by a quarter and unemployment levels still near 25%, all sectors of society are affected, but it is the most modest, the most challenged households, that are most impacted.

The noble efforts of churches and volunteer organizations have assisted so many, but their continued capacity to respond to the needs of children, the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and others has been tested. Recent Eurostat figures indicate that nearly 74 % of the people who were unemployed in Greece in 2014 are still without work, leading one economist to caution that this population may never be able to secure employment. The government finds itself unable to distribute milk to school children and at times, the youth of Greece go without this basic nourishment. In Cyprus, the banking crisis has been weathered, but domestic recovery on the island nation is slow. This already stressful situation has been further complicated by the recent influx of hungry and displaced refugees and asylum seekers, who, on islands like Lesbos and Symi, now outnumber the citizens.

As Orthodox Christians and members of Philoptochos, it is our duty to take the lead in our communities in this humanitarian effort to assist thousands of suffering Greeks and Cypriots affected by the crisis. To date, National Philoptochos, through your love and generosity, has raised and distributed over a half million dollars to carefully vetted organizations in both Greece and Cyprus. But more, much more needs to be done. And so we turn to you.

Please open your kind hearts once again and host a Parish Coffee Hour or lunch in support of the campaign to raise funds for Aid to Greece and Cyprus. Please ask your Parish Priest to encourage participation and speak on the importance of continuing our efforts to help our brethren.

We urge you to help in whatever way you can. Your acts of kindness will not be wasted and will never be forgotten. Thank you.