



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, Inc.

***“You are an Army of AGAPE. You conquer pain and anguish through generosity and kindness.
You are a model of cooperation and collaboration for our church.”***

**...His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros
November 16, 2019**

These are the words used by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros to describe the women of the Philoptochos Society, over 25,000 members strong, in 440 chapters across the Archdiocese of America, all working together to serve the most fragile members of society.

The Society's charitable work over nearly 90 years is well documented. From July 2018 through today, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc. has disbursed approximately \$4,000,000 to its various ministry commitments and special programs, including:

- \$ 850,961 to Saint Basil Academy for operational expenses, for the needs of the children, for the purchase of vans and appliances and tutoring
- \$ 434,450 to Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology to install state-of-the-art technology infrastructure, including new wiring, servers, hardware, software, computers, and programs, student scholarships, and a Financial Literacy program
- \$ 417,657 to hospitals and social service agencies that serve the needs of children
- \$ 462,788 for assistance to individuals through our Department of Social Services
- \$ 225,000 to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for its ministries
- \$ 131,866 for Hurricane Relief in the Bahamas
- \$ 100,000 to Friends of Saint Nicholas for Saint Nicholas National Shrine fundraising
- \$ 75,000 to the Archdiocese of Australia for the Australian Fires
- \$ 75,000 to the Archdiocese of Argentina for assistance to the needy
- \$ 50,000 to the Central African Republic Humanitarian Aid Program
- \$ 85,000 to the Retired Clergy and Widowed Presvyteres Benevolent Fund and
- \$70,000 the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council/National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Benevolent Fund
- \$ 30,000 to the UNICEF Global Child Protection Program
- \$ 51,000 to Saint Photios Shrine
- \$ 36,200 to Orthodox Christian Fellowship for their Summer Leadership Institute
- \$ 25,000 to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in celebration of the Enthronement of Archbishop Elpidophoros
- \$ 25,000 to Feeding American during the COVID-19 pandemic

- \$ 25,000 to Meals on Wheels during the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$ 60,000 for aid to Greece and Cyprus
- \$ 20,000 to Share Your Care Adult Services, Inc. in Albuquerque, New Mexico
- \$ 4,400 to Steps PTO for an Educational Greenhouse for children with Autism

It should be noted that these figures do not reflect the disbursements made by the Direct Archdiocesan District and Metropolis Philoptochos Boards or the 440 chapters across the United States.

However, even more important than the charity we contribute are the hands-on support and programs we provide to help our parishes and local communities. It is the difference between charity and true philanthropy. In January 2015, National President Maria Logus challenged chapters to ***Return to Basics***. In addition to the chapters' amazingly successful fundraising programs, she asked chapters to participate in hands-on philanthropic work.

Feed the Hungry Program

Over 40 million Americans, 11 million of whom are children, go hungry every day in America. Since January 2015, the women of Philoptochos, working with their parish families, have provided ***over 4 million meals*** for hungry souls in the United States.



Children at The Cathedral School in New York, NY worked together with Philoptochos members at a meal packaging event.

Operation Classroom Project

The United States Department of Education has announced that over 94% of public-school teachers provide school supplies for their classrooms out of their own resources without any expectation of reimbursement. Accordingly, President Maria Logus asked every chapter to adopt an underserved school in their local area and provide school supplies, personal hygiene items, and warm clothes. Whether the chapters *filled the school bus* or built a *comfort closet*, chapters across the Archdiocese have embraced this program.



Members of the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos prepare to drop off school supplies.



A Comfort Closet that a Philoptochos member in New Jersey stocked and named in honor of her mother.

The Feed the Hungry Program and Operation Classroom project were designed to assist and serve the underprivileged members of our society in our country and across the world.

Educational Initiatives

In 2018, Philoptochos developed this new initiative to address current, critical issues facing our society.

These programs are designed to serve and inform our stewards, parish communities, and communities at large. Parishes and chapters can use these tools as chapter and community programs to inform and improve the lives of their members. Detailed information about these programs, which are listed below, can be found on the National Philoptochos website at: <https://www.philoptochos.org/community-educational-initiatives/>

- Alzheimer's Disease: Awareness, Understanding, Support and Care
- "Be Safe – Be Smart" – Investigating Technology Safety in the Computer Age
- Stop Bullying in Your Community
- Women's Health Initiative – Heart Disease

Additional initiatives, to be completed in 2020, are:

- Opioid Addiction
- Vaping

- Women’s Health Initiative – Ovarian and Pancreatic Cancers

These initiatives deal with life-threatening diseases, addictions, and social issues and problems affecting our society. If we can save even one life with this information, our efforts will have been rewarded.

Speaker Series: Philoptochos also initiated a speaker series over the last year. Speakers are live streamed via Facebook Live. This year’s speakers were:

- Mary Skafidas Jones, co-editor of, *“Journeys an American Story,”* featuring a collection of immigration essays from across the United States.
- Yvette Manassis Corporan, author of *“Something Beautiful Happened,”* the story of a woman who tracked down the descendants of a Jewish family that her Yiayia hid from the Nazis on a Greek island during World War II.
- Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh, Pastor of St. John the Divine Church in Jacksonville, FL, *“Turning Our Faith into a Hands-On Experience that Gives Us Hope”*
- Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh, Pastor of St. John the Divine Church in Jacksonville, FL, *“Finding Christ in the Crisis”*

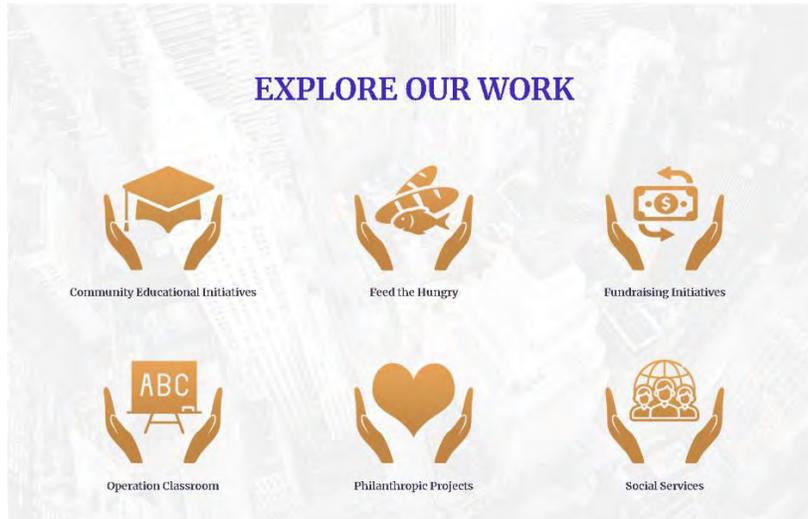
In January 2020, Philoptochos launched a new, modern, interactive website at www.philoptochos.org. The easy to navigate site is a true reflection of the multi-faceted work that Philoptochos stewards across the nation perform.



The homepage of the current website features the navigation bar, a translate button, and a disability accessibility widget.



Moving down the homepage, three key areas Philoptochos are displayed and each photo links to that area on the website.



Explore Our Work easily directs visitors to our Educational Initiatives, Philanthropic Initiatives, and Social Services.

A highlight of the homepage is the sizzle reel, *Come Join Us*, which presents the vision and spirit of a new Philoptochos -- multi-generational and driven by faith and fellowship to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of their communities. Since it debuted, Philoptochos' membership has grown by 1,000 members at a time when many non-profit associations are struggling to survive.



Click the photo to be directed to the *Come Join Us* video.

During the past year, the Public Relations/Communications Committee has worked tirelessly to increase Philoptochos' reach throughout the United States with a dynamic social media presence harnessing the power of Facebook and Instagram. National Philoptochos now has over 5,000 followers, including Nia Vardalos who regularly forwards Philoptochos messages across her social media network, exclaiming, "You know who gets it done? The ladies of the church! Philoptochos is the ever-amazing philanthropic group." The committee has also harnessed the power of the Internet to raise money for the various projects and programs. A #GivingTuesday campaign to benefit Social Services raised \$10,000 in just a few days. These funds were used to produce a *Caregiver's Support Group* to assist individuals caring for ill and aging family members in their homes.

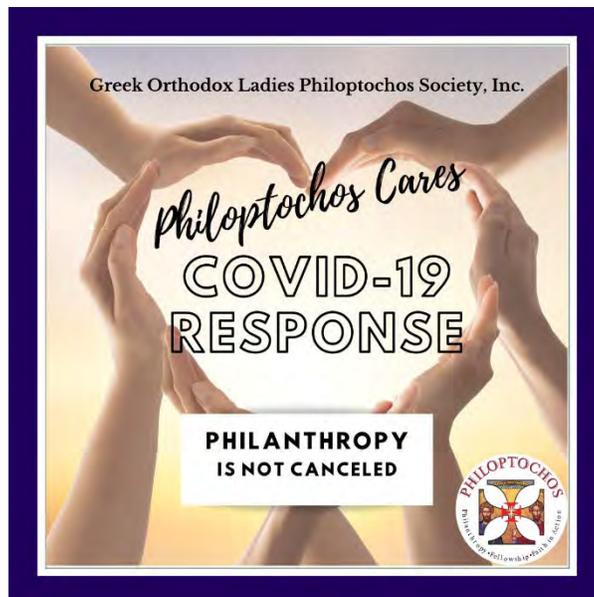


On November 16, 2019, the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos hosted the 17th National Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund Luncheon in Chicago, Illinois. Since its inception in 1989, the Children's Medical Fund Drive has raised well over \$4M for children's hospitals and research programs, as well as special programs that serve the needs of critically ill and fragile children. The Chicago event raised over \$500,000, making it the most successful luncheon to date. The short video below captures the spirit of the Children's Medical Fund luncheon.



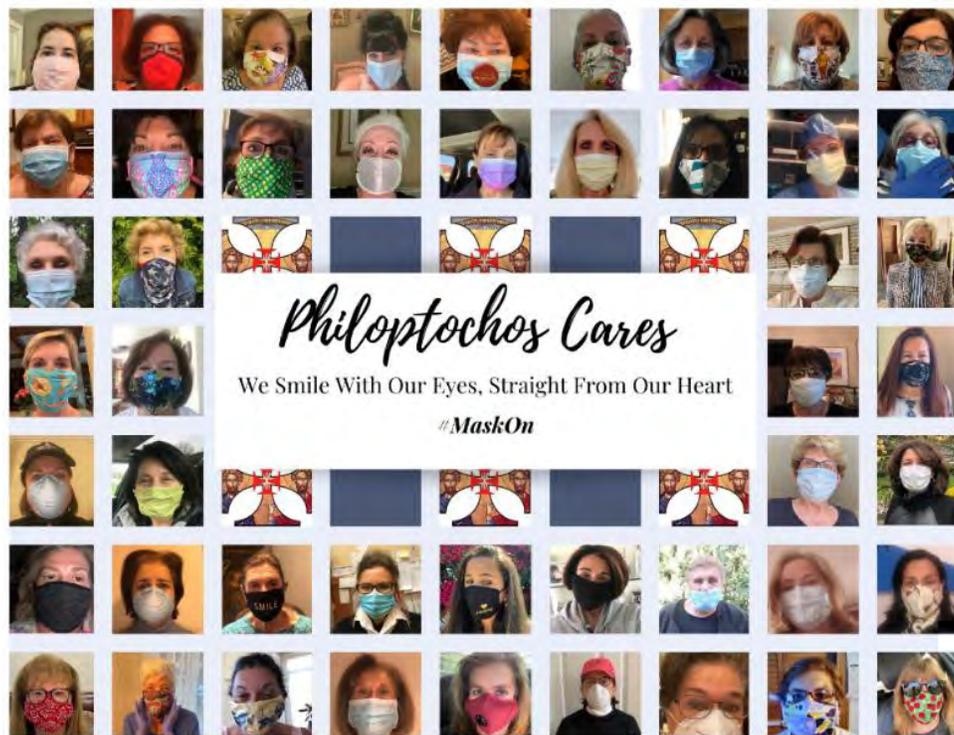
Click the photo to be directed to the *Children's Medical Fund Luncheon* recap video.

COVID-19 Response. In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck the United States, causing businesses to close temporarily and government officials to recommend social distancing, the Philoptochos Society, 26,000 members strong across America, sprang into action. A multi-pronged approach was developed to provide financial, emotional, spiritual, and loving support to Orthodox individuals and families affected by the pandemic.



Chapters and members across the United States modified their efforts to abide by CDC guidelines while continuing to serve those who need it most.

- On March 20, donations totaling \$50,000 were sent to national feeding programs that distribute food across the US, \$25,000 to Feeding America and \$25,000 to the Meals on Wheels Program. These organizations can provide up to 10 meals with every dollar that is donated, thereby multiplying the value of the donations.
- Also, in March, National Philoptochos established the **COVID-19 Emergency Drive** to provide funding for social service requests for rent, mortgage, or utility payments, medical or other daily living expenses, food, or childcare. A plea went out over all Philoptochos social media platforms to support the drive, which enables Philoptochos to assist Orthodox individuals and families, who have been financially impacted by the crisis. To date, the Drive has collected over \$135,000.
- National Philoptochos Department of Social Services developed a streamlined [Application for Assistance](#) to expedite the delivery of critical monetary support to families affected by the Pandemic.
- Mental health resources were posted on the website to provide support and assistance to individuals struggling with anxiety.
- National Philoptochos immediately instituted a dynamic social media campaign to encourage chapter engagement in projects related to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- The **#MaskOn Campaign** urged chapters to make and distribute masks within their local communities to assist with the nationwide need for face coverings, and to encourage everyone to follow the Center for Disease Control's guidelines for social distancing and safety practices.



- The **Power of Thank You Campaign**. Gratitude is the simplest, most powerful way to acknowledge another person's value and humanity. This campaign asked chapters to write thank you notes to "heroes": healthcare personnel, grocery staff, building managers, and delivery workers. In addition, chapters across the country arranged for food to be delivered to healthcare workers as a special "thank you."



- Finally, on April 30, National Philoptochos sponsored a lecture from Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh of *Healthy Minds Healthy Souls, A Radio Ministry of St. John the Divine* entitled, "Finding Christ in the Crisis." Fr. Louh listed resources from the Bible to provide comfort and support during these anxious and challenging times. Over 500 people tuned in to the event, which was livestreamed on Facebook.

For almost 90 years, the Philoptochos Society has performed its work with courtesy and discretion, kindness, and care. The amazing scope of the work of Philoptochos, which encompasses financial assistance, programs, and projects to serve the most fragile members of society, and our own parish communities, would not be possible without its faithful and dedicated stewards across the country. In the words of President Maria Logus,

“Our belief in Christ fuels our mission and inspires us, making it possible for Philoptochos to do good against all odds. We have learned that life’s most urgent question is ‘What are you doing for others?’ To that, Philoptochos members can say, without hesitation or doubt, ‘We Serve.’”