

St. John the Merciful Outreach Ministry Newsletter

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, RALEIGH, NC



In This Issue

- Women’s Center of Wake County.....1
- Philoptochos Outreach.....2
- Stand Down Project.....3
- To Be Seen.....4
- OCM & YAM Outreach Service Project.....5
- Tips to Truly Help the Homeless.....5
- Youth Outreach.....6
- Hope of the Haitians.....7
- Thank You & Upcoming Events.....8

✠ Women’s Center of Wake County ✠

Once again, the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Outreach Ministry has stepped up to assist and ensure the needs of the community are being met.

Over the last few months, clients of the Women’s Center of Wake County were blessed to receive food items, including snacks, as well as household items and furniture. Most of these women are starting over in their life due to domestic violence, substance abuse and/or mental challenges. Therefore, to have a “partnership” with a ministry that is so diligent in helping those that are less fortunate, is a wonderful unity.

If I become aware of a need that I (or my agency) cannot meet, I will contact the Outreach Ministry and they get on it immediately. Usually, by week end, I will receive a phone call saying that the items that I inquired about are ready for pickup.

The Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Outreach Ministry has been a huge blessing in the lives of many women and their children. I hope, trust and pray that this “marriage” is life long! We (The Women’s Center of Wake County) are eternally grateful.

Ann Johnson
Transitional Services Director



Philoptochos Outreach

North Raleigh Ministries (NRM) & the Food Bank of Eastern NC - This past Easter, Philoptochos, GOYA, and HOPE & JOY worked together on a joint project to provide Easter candy for 100 children through North Raleigh Ministries. Philoptochos collects food year round to be given to agencies, such as NRM and the Food Bank of Eastern NC, who supply nonperishable food items to those in need. The NRM Food Pantry provides grocery store items to people in crisis. Households may be eligible for food assistance once per month if they show proof of residence from zip codes 27609, 27612, 27613, 27614, and 27615. This past May, Philoptochos, in one trip, delivered 206 pounds of food to the Food Bank of Eastern NC. Philoptochos President, Sydney Langford, stated that when she delivered the food, "There were people there in a line to be helped". A huge thank you to Philoptochos, GOYA, HOPE & JOY and all of our parishioners for supporting Holy Trinity's food collection efforts.

Holy Trinity's Ongoing Food Drive

North Raleigh Ministries Current Needs:

NRM has an **URGENT** need for donations of:

jelly, canned meats, boxed dinners (such as Hamburger Helper, etc.), canned vegetables (specifically spinach and collards), Comet, liquid soap refills, laundry detergent.

Other needed products - paper products (paper towels, toilet tissue, napkins, Kleenex, paper bags for lunches, paper plates, paper cups), spaghetti sauce and noodles, canned vegetables (carrots, peas, turnips, tomatoes), breakfast items, peanut butter, flour, sugar, vegetable soup, canned pasta, and baking items.

Donated items can be placed on the table in the Fellowship Hall.



Book Drive Results

During the month of May, our Holy Trinity parish was busy donating new and gently used books to benefit children aged 5 and under. 396 books were collected and donated to Wake County Literacy in support of their Family Literacy Program.



Back To School Drive Results

The 2nd annual Back To School Drive to benefit Interact was a huge success! Enough school supplies and \$200 in monetary donations were collected to fill 22 backpacks with: binders, paper, notebooks, pencils, markers, colored pencils, glue, pencil boxes, erasers, folders, etc.

In addition, Philoptochos purchased and donated 50 back to school kits for IOCC which contained a pair of scissors, 3-1 subject notebooks, a ruler, pencil sharpener, an eraser, 6 pencils, and a box of crayons in a cloth bag. The school kits will benefit children in need all of the work who don't have basic school supplies.

✧ The Stand Down Project ✧

SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET MEN'S SHELTER

March 25, 2010 - The Stand Down Project held an event in Raleigh to give homeless vets easy access to resources to help them transition back into society. The day-long event offered a one-stop shot of resources for homeless vets or those who are down on their luck. The event had everything from health care services to spiritual guidance. Services included haircuts, showers, laundry, resume, legal aid, VA, housing, employment, education, mental health and WCHA Mainstream programs.

The full day program began with a Color Guard and National Anthem presentation followed by breakfast and keynote speaker NC House Representative Grier Martin, Mayor Charles Meeker, Wake County Board of Commissioner Chair Tony Gurley and Wake County Commissioner Lindy Brown, and the Raleigh/Wake 10-Year Plan Liaison also provided remarks to the crowd present.

Nationally, Stand Down is a grassroots, community-based intervention program designed to help the estimated 200,000 homeless veterans "combat" life on the streets. Local sponsors included Wake County Durham VA Medical Center and the US Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service. The Stand Down concept was popular in the Vietnam War, affording battle-weary soldier's safe camp where services were provided and they had the opportunity to renew their spirit, health, and overall sense of well-being.

Several Holy Trinity's Outreach members participated for its third consecutive year helping

the shelter kitchen to serve breakfast and lunch to Veterans. Over 900 meals were served by day's end. We thank you kindly for helping those less fortunate who served our country well.

To Those Who Give

by Michael Holloway

Some give us what we want
Some give what we need
Like the clothes we are wearing
Or the shoes on our feet.

Some give us a hot meal
So we don't eat food that's too cold
Some give us blankets
When the weather is cold.

Some might take us to church
Cause they have that type of heart
Some might give us a job
So we can have a new start.

Some might give us their phone number
So we don't feel alone
Some might get us bus tickets
So we can get back home.

I'm not thinking about what you drive
Or where you might even live
I just want to say "Thank You"
All those that give.

Michael is the editor of News From Our Shoes. Outreach Ministry has previously spent a day with Michael walking the streets of downtown Raleigh. Time was spent viewing the day in the life of someone without a home. Where do they go during the day and what do they do? Where even the small and seemingly mundane necessities of life like using the restroom becomes a challenge. If you would like to read more you can visit the News From Our Shoes website at www.newsfromourshoes.net.

To Be Seen

by Chris Delis

Outreach Ministry would like to share the following letter from one of our young adults. Chris Delis is currently a student at Appalachian State University. Chris wrote this essay as a project for his sociology class focusing on the homeless of Raleigh/Wake County. Chris' talent for writing is apparent, but more importantly is his compassion and keen insight to the current situation of homelessness, not only locally but globally. Thank you Chris. Outreach Ministry Staff.

Whether or not your eyes choose to see them, they are always there. Vagabonds of the street, those haggard hitchhikers you never recognize as you glide towards your own reality - school, work, church. But theirs still exists. That black, seeming hopeless oblivion which is homelessness. Nobody chooses to wade constantly through the violent waters of the street, rough it from sunup to sundown with no hope for tomorrow and a mindset revolving around simply getting through the day - find some food, a warm, dry place to sleep. It's just the card that is drawn. It's life. It's a facet of society that goes unchecked and uncared for, a problem that is mainly managed and rarely prevented.

The homeless population in Raleigh and Wake County abroad only represents a small piece of the global issue that haunts humanity. Hunger, addiction, insanity, confusion; these are all trials that the homeless face each and every day. Of course there are committees that seek to end the problem; North Carolina has implemented a ten-year action plan to do just that. But will it work? A lot of things can look good on paper. It's putting those plans into effective motion that will alleviate the problem, and have those plans been put into play? Since the ten year action plan has merely just begun it is hard to say yes or no. However, it is viable to state that any sort of action is better than none at all. Governments do a lot of talking and law making; it is up to the individual to roll up their sleeves and dive into the problem.

Hunger is the same for everybody, and nobody deserves it. In Raleigh, there are several shelters that help in nourishing the starved souls of the streets and offering beds and other services. The city has boosted awareness of the issue, local community schools and universities have begun offering classes on the subject. The word in getting out and there are places where a twinkle of light can be seen as the end of the tunnel. But it's still not enough to cut through the darkness of homelessness. The staff at these homeless shelters are overworked and the facilities themselves are running low on budgets and supplies.

These are soldiers that fought for our freedom, mothers and fathers, doctors; some could be great musicians or poets. These are people that are going hungry. Humans that are starving in a system that has nearly kicked them out of the loop. And there are some good souls trying to lend a helping hand, but not enough. The citizens of Raleigh need to offer more of their free time to those in need, nobody knows what the deck of life holds, who knows if the next card you draw could be homelessness. How would you cope with the hunger? How would you make it through the day? What would your eyes see?



OCM & YAM Men's Shelter Outreach Project

On April 24, 2010, OCM (Orthodox Christian Men) & YAM (Young Adult Ministry) teamed up to prepare and serve lunch to over 125 men at the South Wilmington Street Men's Shelter. Monetary donations were given to purchase all of the needed food items. An enthusiastic team began preparing the lunch (submarine sandwiches, pickles, chips, dessert, and beverage) around 10:00 am. After serving the prepared lunch, the group pitched in to "spring clean" the Men's Shelter kitchen.

Above Pictures (left to right): Paula Kroustalis preparing food. Jim & Dori Riley, Jimmy Sarant, and Paula preparing submarine sandwiches. Deacon Gavrillo, YAM, & OCM serving lunch. Not pictured George Pappas & John Saporilas.

Tips to Truly Help the Homeless

Over the last couple of issues, we have offered tips on how to help the homeless that you may come in contact. We hope that you find these tips helpful.

1. Take precautions for your own safety. Some living on the streets are criminals and fugitives running from the law. Always be prudent while talking with street people. Stay in areas where other people can see you. Don't take unnecessary chances. For example, if you're not comfortable getting out of the car at an exit or traffic light, consider purchasing \$5.00 McDonald's gift cards to keep in your car and that can be easily handed to someone without you getting out of your car. This will provide a meal for someone and help assure your safety.
2. Encourage the homeless to get help through local agencies, such as:
 - 📍 **South Wilmington Street Men's Shelter**, located at 1420 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh 27603, (919) 857-9428
 - 📍 **Interact SAFE Center** - 24 hour Counseling and Support, (919) 828-3067
 - 📍 **Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting (Wake County Human Services)**, (919) 212-7990
 - 📍 **Wren House** - Youth Crisis Hotline - Provide Crisis Intervention, serving youth ages 10-17 who are homeless, runaway, or who just need a place to stay, (919) 832-7866

The Church's very identity was understood as being revealed through service and sharing. For "the Church is only the Church when it is there for other people."

(D. Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, New York, 1967, 203)

Youth Outreach

SUNDAY SCHOOL - OCMC AGAPE CANISTER PROGRAM

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

Matthew 28:19

Our Sunday School's Agape Canister Program began in 1997 with a kick-off campaign called "Pennies From Heaven", in which each child was asked to bring at least three pennies each week (one each for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Although we started with the thought of giving three pennies each week, any amount of donation will be accepted. Our youth will be given the opportunity to donate each week in their Sunday School class. Donations go to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), a non-profit program dedicated to meeting the needs of children, families, and communities throughout the world, regardless of race, color, or creed. All funds collected by the Agape Canister Program are earmarked for medical care and clinics, water wells, agricultural development, food, and clothing, support personnel (e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers), the construction of schools, and the education of indigenous people in their own communities. Since 1988, the Agape Canister Program has contributed over 1.6 million dollars in the form of grants to aid people in: Albania, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Costa Rica, Romania, Chad, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Madagascar, Philippines, Alaska, Russia, Slovakia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, and other places around the world.



Did You Know?
Since our Agape Canister Program began in 1997, our Sunday School Canister & Lenten Coinbox programs have collected \$1,659,18 in support of OCMC.

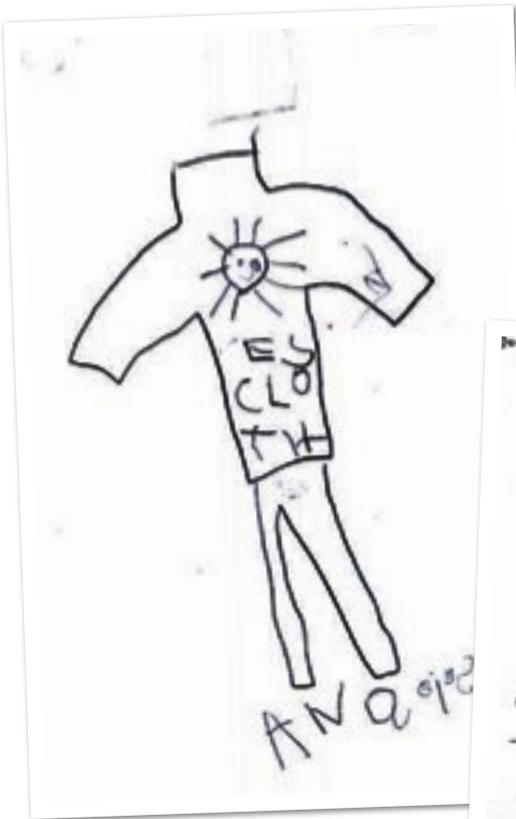
INTRODUCING SERVANTHOOD VOLUNTEERING TO CHILDREN

I felt lucky that I was asked to do something I could do with the kids. I used to do more volunteer work, but since I have little ones now, it's been a little tricky to figure out how I can be helpful while still getting something useful done and not being underfoot and driving everyone crazy!

Maxime had been asking what we could do to help homeless people - she's very worried about them. Her concern is what prompted me to ask if there was a way that my children and I could do something together. I've had good intentions for awhile but, in her determined kid way, she made it a higher priority, not just something we would do "some day". When we came to sort clothes that had been donated by our parish, I let the kids help when they wanted to help and go play when they wanted to play. When they were close by, we talked a bit about what we were doing, gratitude for what we have, the importance of helping others, and accepting help when we need it. I shared with them how I've been helped and how I have helped others. I also shared with them that when we go through difficult times, it puts things in perspective to continue to help others. We always have something to offer, no matter what our own situation.

I grew up knowing my mother volunteered at the hospital and I started volunteering when I was old enough as well. I also learned through my own experiences that we help ourselves when we help others. I want the kids to grow into that understanding - to just have it be a natural part of who they are and what they do. They are a blessing to me and have a lot to offer others.

Submitted by: Alexia Idoura and daughters Maxime & Anais



The Hope of the Haitians

by Allie Russos

Our last day in Haiti was spent in Port-au-Prince. We started off driving through town, speechless from seeing what remained 4 months after the devastating quake hit. Our first stop was to see old friends from St. Vincent's. One of the nurses, Michele was there to greet us. Eluvie, who previously worked in the kitchen at St. Vincent's, was there as well. Seeing their faces, hugging them and knowing they were ok, was such an incredible feeling. It was also very emotional for me to see baby Margarett (who was left orphan at St. Vincent's on our previous trip in December). She was so strong, so beautiful. Next we walked to what was left of St. Vincent's. There are no words to describe what it feels like to look at a place you once stayed, once slept in, and see it completely destroyed, with bodies of children we knew and loved still buried beneath. There are no words, just great sadness. But the day had to continue on. On our walk back, we stopped at a restaurant to eat and regroup. I sat there with Michele (our Haitian nurse), drinking a Prestige (the Haitian beer), and listening to Phil Collins "Another Day in Paradise" play. There was too much to take in. With all of this being said, I'd have to say that the drive home was the most memorable part for me. I had 2 hours, standing, not sitting, in the back of a truck driving from Port-au-Prince to Montrouge to absorb all that had happened that day. We had only been on the road for 5 minutes when we all turn our heads quickly to see something in the road, and then look at each other with mouths dropped to verify the object, a dead body laying in the street. Too much devastation, too much to absorb. But as the drive continues, and as I attempt to process through all that has happened, something in me shifts from despair to hope. I am standing in a truck with hair I have only washed in the ocean, dreaded and tangled, bug bites all over my face and body that one could easily play connect the dots, and not to mention that I smell of something awful, but at that moment, I felt like a queen. Every place we passed, people were smiling, cheerful and waving at us, so happy to see us. You couldn't help but smile and wave back. Its hard to explain, but theres something powerful about seeing these people, who have been struck over and over again with hardship, knocked down when you think it wasn't possible to get any worse, still smiling & waving. I guess Abraham Lincoln was right, people are as happy as they make up their mind to be. The Haitians have a hope that inspires. Standing there driving for 2 hours past all kinds of devastation, its easy to be disheartened, but in the forefront of that picture, are beautiful people whose lives continue on, shopping in the markets, building, laughing, playing, singing and dancing. Because the Haitians know that this terrible quake will not stop them, that they will continue on, they will persevere, and they will be happy regardless of their circumstances. That was a moment that almost took my breath away, as I stood there in awe, so incredibly humbled by the hope of the Haitians.



Thank You...

The Outreach Ministry would like to thank everyone who has helped us to serve the needs of the poor. Over the last few months our Outreach Ministry has provided a variety of furniture items, kitchen items, and clothing for children, women and men.

Through the thoughtful donation of one parishioner we have been supplying food to the needy using Food Lion Gifts Cards that were donated to our Outreach Ministry. In several cases these cards provided the only food that people were going to have that day.

With monetary donations we were able to help stock the food pantry at the Women's Center, which was almost depleted of food items.

All outreach help is good and benefits those in need. The bigger agencies such as the American Red Cross, IOCC, etc., are able to impact many on a larger scale. Through our local outreach, we have the benefit of being able to supply the needs of people directly in our community. When we take furniture and beds in, the impact is immediate as that same day they no longer have to sleep on the floor. When we take food and dishes in, they are able to eat on plates while sitting at a table. When our Outreach Ministry supplies clothing, they now have more than 1 or 2 items to wear. This is a front line ministry, which goes directly to those in need. The impact is immediate and so is the satisfaction.

Thank everyone for all of their time and donations in helping our Outreach Ministry.

PS – From time to time we have projects for any of our children who might need community service projects in school. Contact Deacon Gavriilo for more information.

“Christ becomes for you a stranger, a person without clothes, food, and health, a prisoner...moving about homeless, naked, sick, and needy. So long as there is time, let us desire then to visit this Christ, to care for Christ, to fee Christ, to clothe Christ, to gather Christ, and to treasure Christ.”

*--Gregory Naziansus,
Oration 1440*



Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Raleigh, NC

Pastor: Very Reverend Father Paul Kaplanis
frpaulk@email.msn.com

Newsletter Angels:

Allie Russos: allierussos@yahoo.com
Ioanna Schmidt: e1baby@hotmail.com
John Saparilas: johnwsaparilas@gmail.com
Laura Saparilas: lksaparilas@gmail.com
Deacon Gavriilo: gmilkovich@nc.rr.com