

Social Service Institutions / Organizations

Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America [FOCA]

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The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA), as an official arm of the Church, is a national organization open to all Orthodox Christians seeking fellowship and service projects. FOCA is active on the national, district, and local chapter levels with its junior program serving youth ages 10 through 18. Metropolitan Herman is the FOCA's Spiritual Leader.

FOCA is dedicated to building fellowship among Orthodox Christians through service and mission and has contributed to the Church's charitable, missionary, and educational work. The United Fund provides grants to OCA seminaries and assistance to missions. The junior program offers numerous youth programs and ministries. FOCA also publishes *The Orthodox Christian Journal*.

Accomplishments/Progress Since the 13th All-American Council

Seminarian/Seminary Support Programs

- ◆ **Adopt-a-Married-Seminarian Program:** The FOCA coordinator of this program works with the deans of St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Seminaries to match a sponsor such as an FOCA chapter, district, or member with a married seminarian who has special financial needs. The sponsor then provides monthly monetary support to the seminarian and his family during the year. Over the past three years more than \$50,000 has been contributed to seminarians through this program. This year approximately \$1,800 per month is being distributed.
- ◆ **Seminarian Christmas Gift Program:** Each Christmas the FOCA provides Christmas gifts of \$50 per child for the children of every seminarian enrolled at St. Tikhon's, St. Vladimir's, St. Herman, and Christ the Savior Seminaries. Over the past three years \$13,200 has been given to 264 children through this project.
- ◆ **Seminarian Christmas Adoption:** This is a project of the New Jersey District of the FOCA in which a chapter or parish in New Jersey "adopts" a seminarian's family and purchases gifts for each family member from a "wish list." The gifts are wrapped and taken to St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Seminaries during the Christmas season and given to the families.
- ◆ **Seminary Emergency Fund:** This program provides a mechanism for raising donations for sudden, unexpected, or extraordinary needs of individual seminarians, seminarians' families, or seminaries. Additionally, each seminary receives an annual monetary gift through the FOCA's **United Fund** program, which is in turn supported by earmarked donations. Over the past three years the seminaries have received annual donations of approximately \$7,500 from this program.
- ◆ **"Serving our Seminaries"** was the official theme of the FOCA for the year 2003. The V. Rev. Michael Dahulich, dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary, and John Erickson, the dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, were invited guests at the FOCA's 77th national convention held in Colonial Williamsburg, VA. They, along with a trustee of St. Herman Seminary, participated in a special plenary session.
- ◆ Through its annual **Gifts of Love** Fund drive for 2003/2004, the FOCA raised \$27,000 to purchase a new vehicle for St. Herman Seminary. The vehicle was formally presented to His Grace Bishop Nikolai in May 2004 at Kodiak, AK. The V. Rev. Chad Hatfield, dean of St. Herman Seminary, attended the 2004 FOCA national convention in Grand Island, NY.
- ◆ In 2002 the **Gifts of Love** program gave \$12,500 to the Diocese of Alaska to help children and to provide medical supplies.
- ◆ The 2004/2005 **Gift of Love** has been earmarked for the new Archbishop Arseny Institute in the Archdiocese of Canada. These funds are to be used to help establish the library for the institute. A formal presentation of this gift will be made at the 14th All-American Council in Toronto, ON.

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Support for Youth Programs

- ◆ The FOCA National Junior Department works in concert with the OCA's Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry's Youth Movement.
- ◆ FOCA Junior Chapters are organized in many parishes and provide educational, religious, athletic, cultural, and fellowship activities. They are connected through a regional and national network.
- ◆ The FOCA sponsors an annual basketball tournament that brings together hundreds of Orthodox youth. The last three were held in Campbell, OH, Allison Park, PA, and Minneapolis, MN. All Orthodox youth are invited to participate. Our national bowling and golf tournaments are also open to youth from any Orthodox parish community.
- ◆ The FOCA provides an annual grant of \$9,000 to the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards to fund an intern for the OCA's Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry.
- ◆ The National FOCA and Ohio District FOCA sponsor a variety of summer camps for Orthodox youth.
- ◆ The FOCA sponsors the Celebrations of Faith Creative Arts Festival. This annual program is open to all Orthodox youth. It provides an opportunity for youth to enter works of art in several categories based on the annual theme of the OCA Youth Movement as chosen by the Holy Synod of Bishops. Each winner is awarded a \$100 savings bond, and each entrant is given a small gift such as a travel icon. The FOCA currently provides \$1,000 annually for this program. This amount is expected to rise as the festival grows in popularity.
- ◆ The FOCA supports the OCA Youth Movement in its role as an official youth organization of the OCA. It also encourages participation by youth in local deaneries through diocesan youth teams.

Support for Young Adult Programs

- ◆ A young adult conference and specially organized young adult activities including a leadership forum were added to the annual agenda of the FOCA national convention in 2003 and 2004. Through these gatherings, several young adult service projects have been organized.
- ◆ The FOCA, in conjunction with the OCA's Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry, organized and held a successful service project at SS. Cosmas and Damian Adult Home in Staten Island, NY, in October 2004. The FOCA contributed \$1,000 to help offset the costs of supplies for repairs made at the home by a group of young adults from around the country. Additional monies were raised by a floor drive at the 2004 FOCA convention.
- ◆ A service project is also planned to be held in conjunction with the 14th All-American Council in Toronto, ON.

Ongoing Services provided by the FOCA to the Church

- ◆ Seminarian/seminary support, as noted above, has totaled more than \$125,000 over the past three years.
- ◆ Annual contributions to the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS) of \$9,000 for a three-year total of \$27,000 to fund an OCA youth intern.
- ◆ Sponsorship of the Celebrations of Faith Creative Arts Festival.
- ◆ Publication of the *Orthodox Christian Journal*, the oldest English-language Orthodox publication.
- ◆ Sponsorship of numerous annual events bringing together Orthodox Christians for fellowship, worship, service, athletics, etc.
- ◆ Annual mission grants to the OCMC totaling \$9,000 over the past three years. These grants enable both FOCA members and non-members to join various OCMC mission teams.
- ◆ The awarding of annual scholarships to FOCA members attending colleges, seminaries, and military academies. Over the past three years, 38 scholarships totaling \$38,000 have been awarded. Each year one scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 is reserved for a seminarian. Seminarians are also eligible to receive scholarships from the general scholarship pool. The judging of the scholarship applications is based primarily on candidates' service to the Church and participation in the FOCA.
- ◆ Support for the OCA's Annual Christmas Stocking Project from FOCA chapters and districts totals about \$6,000 per year.
- ◆ Coordination of the **Mission Hotline**, a church article-exchange project of the FOCA that serves all canonical Orthodox missions in the United States. The Hotline serves as a "broker" of church items donated by established parishes to mission parishes in need of such items. The chair of the project maintains a "wish list" of church articles needed by the missions. Since its inception in 1948 and its reactivation 20 years ago the Mission Hotline has assisted more than 65 Orthodox missions.

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The greatest challenge facing the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America is to attract new members and new chapters to fulfill its mission and to further expand the service it provides to the Church. Outreach to Orthodox Christians throughout North America to establish new areas of growth - especially in missions and parishes of the South, the West, and Canada - is something we want to explore. Essential to the task will be effective promotional tools, personal contact and electronic communication, as well as common goals and commitment to the life and mission of the Orthodox Church in America.

Plans for the Future

- ◆ To continue supporting the Church and its dioceses in whatever way possible.
- ◆ To continue and expand current programs.
- ◆ To encourage membership growth.

The FOCA intends on taking the following steps to accomplish these goals:

- ◆ To better inform the general Church membership and clergy of our activities, mission, and goals through improved public relations and promotional material in order to encourage a growth in membership that will in turn sustain expanded and new programs.
- ◆ To more effectively use our web site, orthodoxfellowship.org; *The Orthodox Church* newspaper; and the OCA web site, which includes a link to our web site, to promote our programs and encourage membership growth.
- ◆ To strengthen our existing chapters and members through improved communications and support programs.

Accountability

The FOCA serves The Orthodox Church in America through its numerous programs, as detailed in this report, and members of the FOCA serve on the following departments, commissions, and committees of the OCA:

- ◆ **OCA Administrative Committee:** four of seven members
- ◆ **Metropolitan Council:** nine of thirty members/alternates
- ◆ **Audit Committee:** one of three members
- ◆ **Department of Chaplaincies:** one (the executive director) of five members
- ◆ **Department of Christian Education:** one writer
- ◆ **Department of Christian Witness and Service:** two of eleven members
- ◆ **Department of Communications:** one of nine members
- ◆ **Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry:** six of sixteen members (including chair and director)
- ◆ **Department of Humanitarian Aid:** one of four members
- ◆ **Pension Board:** three of eleven members (secretary)
- ◆ **Pre-Conciliar Commission:** seven of nineteen members
- ◆ **Late Vocations Committee:** one of four members (coordinator)
- ◆ **Medical/Ethics Commission:** three of nine members
- ◆ **St Tikhon's Seminary Board of Trustees:** five members
- ◆ **St Herman Seminary Board of Trustees:** two members
- ◆ **The Orthodox Christian Mission Center:** one member
- ◆ **ILAASI - Friends of St. Herman Seminary:** one member (president)

Many members of the FOCA serve on the diocesan councils, committees, and departments of the dioceses of the OCA and on parish boards/committees in parishes that have FOCA chapters.