

Social Service Institutions / Organizations

SS. Cosmas and Damian Adult Home / St. Ireney Chapel

Argyra Lapchuk, *Administrator*
2099 Forest Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10303

Office 718-720-8800
Fax 718-447-8095
Web www.saintcosmasanddamian.org

Accomplishments/Progress Since the 13th All-American Council

Saints Cosmas and Damian Adult Home continues to provide a sheltered environment for the elderly and disabled who are Orthodox Christians as well as for non-Orthodox Christians. The home seeks to provide an environment where each person can maintain and improve their independence and at the same time integrate their community and family relationships into their life at the home to enhance their overall quality of life. In order to meet these goals, the home maintains a wide range of services for the residents, including case management, assistance with medications, personal care, housekeeping, and laundry services, as well as meal preparation.

To assist in meeting the total needs of the individual, extensive programs have been maintained and new ones added to motivate our residents to maintain a full life even when faced with physical and spiritual difficulties. An important element in allowing the elderly to adapt to institutional living is the ability to provide a place for worship, prayer, and pastoral counseling in conjunction with clinical intervention. Although we are no longer able to provide a full-time Orthodox chaplain for services and visitation to our hospitalized residents, we are currently maintaining regular Sunday Liturgies for our Orthodox residents as well as for about seven families in the Staten Island community who join us for worship. Under the direction of His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman, we are fortunate to have retired clergy as well as clergy from Saint Vladimir's Seminary and the Chancery in Syosset service our chapel on Sundays and most major feast days. Our goal would be to have a full-time chaplain to develop spiritual programs and an ongoing relationship with residents and their families so that the home becomes a community rather than just another "institution." Pastoral care is truly an important element missing in our day-to-day programs.

Accountability

We are grateful for the hard work and sacrifice of our board of directors, who have sought to improve the operations and programs here at Saints Cosmas and Damian. Over the past three years we have undertaken major capital improvements on our first floor and public lounge areas. New carpeting, lighting, and paint were added to all the lounges and upper floor hallways. New décor was completed in the dining room, and old kitchen equipment has been replaced. Upgrades were completed to our elevators and to our front lobby area as well. Additional improvements included complete repaving of the parking area.

Our 25th anniversary year in 2002 was celebrated with three separate events, including a family picnic with entertainment. Saints Cosmas and Damian Day on November 1, 2002, was celebrated with Divine Liturgy and a service of thanksgiving celebrated by Metropolitan Herman. Clergy from the greater New York area attended the services and reception that followed. The final event sponsored by the board of directors involved a choral and dance group performance. We were fortunate that the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Church in Clifton, NJ, offered us the use of their facilities for the fundraiser celebration and dinner that followed. The need to strengthen our ties to the community and local parish groups still exists. However, the events during our 25th anniversary year were indeed an example of the positive outcome when the community and local parishes work together to promote institutions such as Saints Cosmas and Damian Adult Home.

The housing market for seniors and the ill and infirm has changed dramatically since Saints Cosmas and Damian opened its doors in 1977. The struggle to maintain quality services and programs has become ever greater each year. Operational expenses can only be met with a sufficient number of residents - or endowments to support the type of care we seek to provide. Maintaining a census of residents sufficient to meet our costs is a constant struggle when we must compete with the corporate owners of new facilities who have extensive capital to invest in furnishings, staffing, and

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other amenities. New government regulations have also imposed substantial financial demands on facilities for seniors. It is in this context that we note that unless the faithful of the Church support our role in providing care to those in need, Saints Cosmas and Damian cannot continue to compete with the facilities that have a wide capital funding base, nor will it continue to provide unique and attractive programs for those in need.

Some of the positive programs that have enriched the lives of our residents recently include our ongoing Christmas gift program, where parishes participate in helping to provide our residents with gift packages on the Feast of the Nativity. Each year at least 20 church school groups take part in this program.

In October 2004, the OCA Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry and the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) sponsored an all-day restoration project in which more than 20 young adults spent the day planting, painting, and undertaking clean-up projects to help improve the surroundings for the residents. More important than all the work accomplished was the impression left with the families and residents themselves after seeing these young people carry out the work with enthusiasm and genuine interest in their well-being.

During the past year, the board of directors and staff have sought out other means of making Saints Cosmas and Damian's presence known in the community and in the minds of the parishes of the Church. With the blessing of His Beatitude, a Special Appeal was sent to all OCA parishes to help supplement expenses incurred when our resident census had fallen significantly. Nearly \$40,000 was raised through this appeal.

New literature and brochures were published; promotional programs have been presented to local community groups by our admissions case manager; and press releases have been sent to the local papers. An extensive open house was held in the fall of 2004 for community social service agencies, and this summer the home will be featured on local cable TV in a discussion related to the local Alzheimer's group.

These are but a few of the examples of how programs can be successful in bringing the work of the home into the community and into the lives of the Orthodox faithful. As an institution, Saints Cosmas and Damian will only continue to provide care if such programs can be expanded and built upon.

Plans for the Future

Our immediate concerns center on the lack of adequate staffing for our current programs. The high cost of skilled as well as caring staff puts additional strain on our operational expenses. This also affects the quality of care that we can provide to our residents.

It is the hope of those who work at Saints Cosmas and Damian, and those who serve on the board of directors, that we can expand our programs and assume a broader role in caring for those in need. Improvement of current programs is certainly needed, but the addition of assisted-living services would provide more care for those who cannot remain at the current level of services we are licensed to provide. Unfortunately, in order for us to provide alternative types of care, certain capital improvements and more specialized staffing would be required. A commitment to financing this would require adequate support and need within the community, as well as from the faithful of The Orthodox Church in America.