



NEWS & NEEDS

SPECIAL CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS EDITION

SUMMER 2018



Among IOCC's projects in Greece has been supporting the largest soup kitchen in Athens.



Supporters Surpass Challenge Gift to Aid Families in Greece

Donors Give over \$1.2 Million, Exceeding \$1 Million Jaharis Family Foundation Inc. Challenge Gift

From October 2017 through February 2018, IOCC supporters gave more than \$1.2 million under the Jaharis Family Foundation Inc.'s \$1 million matching challenge to help people in need in Greece.

In October 2017, IOCC announced the foundation's challenge, issued to help support emergency and development projects in Greece. The Jaharis Family Foundation Inc. offered to match donations to IOCC's *Give for Greece* program, dollar for dollar, up to \$1 million. IOCC issued a call, and supporters across the country and the world responded.

Support for IOCC's efforts in Greece will help provide fresh food, supplemental food assistance, medical aid, support for agricultural associations and small businesses, refugee assistance, and other relief over the next two years, benefitting an estimated 50,000 families throughout the country.

IOCC / Eirini Vourtourmis

Local Milk On Demand

Boosting Innovative Businesses

Fresh milk straight from the farm, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That's the idea behind Apo Proto Cheri, or Firsthand, a new business in the town of Kozani, Greece. The company, founded by six young farmers, has two locations with vending machines where customers can buy milk any time of the day or night.

With IOCC's help, a third location in a nearby city will be opening soon. Through IOCC's *Give for Greece* program, Apo Proto Cheri received business mentoring, a new milk-vending machine, and a cooler tank for milk.



Easy, affordable access to local milk is the idea behind one new Greek business IOCC is helping expand.



This community garden in Komotini, run by agricultural co-op Spartakos, gives families a way to grow their own produce.

Growing New Hope in Greece

Co-ops Foster Productivity, Community

In 2011 Iriana, her husband, and their two young daughters were living in an apartment in the city of Komotini, in northeast Greece. A civil engineer, Iriana worked part time, but she and her husband had been contemplating moving from the city. They learned of a community garden in the center

of Komotini managed by local agricultural cooperative Spartakos, and they applied for a plot.

The family's first garden plot was 540 square feet, and the whole family worked to cultivate it. Her children looked forward to the time each day when they could visit the garden to play, plant, and collect their own vegetables. The positive experience motivated Iriana to join Spartakos, whose 19 member-families grow grains and produce flour, pastas, and bulk cereals. She's now the co-op's administrator.

Iriana's family eventually moved to a house outside the city, where they now have land and their own garden. Living in the more-rural setting, she says, the whole family has found greater balance. Iriana and Spartakos's other members are planning for the future. Once the co-op is more robust, they intend to create an exhibition space and an educational program for children. They want younger generations to have the chance to see and touch seeds, plants, and earth and to learn how produce is grown before it reaches the table.

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International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian relief and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance, and advocacy.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.



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Coding and other high-tech skills give youth a career edge.

Skills for Tomorrow

Youth Learn Digital Coding, Form Friendships

Greece suffers the highest rate of unemployment in Europe — 47%.* With a lack of employment opportunities and resources, youth become more susceptible to risks such as marginalization and exclusion.

With partner Finn Church Aid, the Co{de} + Create project brought together local and refugee youth to learn valuable digital skills that help them visualize their potential and look forward to future opportunities. This experience has also facilitated interaction and communication across languages and cultures.

“It’s nice to have a place in the city where I feel welcome,” said one refugee participant.

Co{de} + Create taught students beginner and advanced level coding, computer programming, and digital content creation, as well as allowed students to design and program a 3D robot with their new skills. The project offered weekly assignments, quizzes, and access to the learning lab, where students could practice their skills and experiment while spending time with peers in a safe place.

“I like everything [about the] class. I’m very thankful to my teachers and all other staff,” said one student after completing the program.

Providing education and job skills to youth is only one way in which your generosity makes a vital difference. Investing in the next generation improves the options each of these young people will have as they make their way in the world and shape their futures.

*Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



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Growing New Hope in Greece

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Spartakos's members are mostly parents who cultivate land in order to support their families, and Iriana is very grateful for IOCC's support. Most member-families still face major economic problems, and they haven't received any form of governmental support, either individually or as a co-op. "IOCC cared for us," said Iriana. "They came from America to support us, while nobody ever came from [the government] to check out our situation.... We came into a situation that we can't get out of easily, but we work really hard."

Iriana believes in the co-op, named for the famous local Thracian gladiator and military leader, because its members have different perspectives but common goals and the will to work. This collaboration and the range of members' skills and experience have allowed Spartakos, and other agricultural initiatives, to grow stronger even in uncertain economic times.

As part of its *Give for Greece* programming, IOCC has supplied Spartakos and other co-ops with equipment, marketing, and training: Spartakos's new pasta-drying and thermal packaging machines are bolstering productivity. A new logo, product brand, and website (spartakos.ast.gr) are helping Spartakos market themselves more professionally, reaching more customers. In addition, this co-op was one of 19 that participated in an IOCC-funded training on safe food handling and are now internationally certified in food-safety management.

Groups participating in this IOCC project also "pay it forward," donating part of their produce to community groups. Spartakos has donated more than 1,400 pounds of pasta to local eldercare homes, homes for people with disabilities, and children's institutions, extending the project's positive impacts into the broader community.



SAVE THE DATE

IOCC SUNDAY

Nov. 18, 2018

- **CLERGY:** Announce IOCC Sunday, pray for those we serve, and plan a special collection.
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Plan an event or IOCC display. Organize a coffee hour, presentation, or luncheon to benefit IOCC.
- **YOUTH:** Organize a kit drive or your own IOCC fundraiser — a car wash, dance-a-thon, or spaghetti dinner.

More info available at iocc.org/dayofsharing