



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

SHARING GOOD

SPECIAL EDITION

Securing Shelter Eases Worries For Syrian Refugees



The only memories that Sara, 5, has of Syria are those that her parents keep alive. She and her two sisters, Arax, 11, and Palig, 4, used to enjoy a peaceful and prosperous life in a predominantly Armenian neighborhood of Aleppo. Her father, Sarkis, had a good job as an engineer, and her mother, Yasapet, was a schoolteacher.

Their peace was shattered in 2011. The family lived in terror for two years before their neighborhood came under attack and their home was demolished. They fled to Amman, Jordan, carrying only ID papers and property deeds that Sarkis always carried with him since the conflict began.

Sara's parents say it is the first time that they have felt safe in more than four years, but they

aren't allowed to work and have no money for rent or food. Their home is now a 2-room apartment rented through an IOCC program to assist Syrian and Iraqi refugee families with young children, disabled family members, or women-headed households. IOCC, an ACT Alliance member, also provides these vulnerable refugee families relief parcels filled with household and hygiene supplies needed to preserve their health and dignity.

Sara and her older sister are in school but may soon have to quit. Sara's parents, who want a better life for their daughters, have applied for resettlement in any Western country that will accept them. Now they wait and pray for better days ahead.

FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



Fall is nature's season of harvesting and enjoying the fruits of summer's labor. Knowledge can also bear fruit for people by helping improve their quality of life—like Yekul, who suffered needlessly from a preventable disease called podoconiosis, or podo for short. Once she learned how to protect her feet from this debilitating condition, Yekul was able to take care of herself and her child. In the US, IOCC is also helping at-risk youth in Alaska towards a healthier lifestyle by equipping them with life skills needed to become more resilient against substance abuse.

As you read these stories of small triumphs over adversity, know that your support of IOCC has helped plant the seeds for their success and together, we all reap the benefits of sharing Christ's love with those in need by experiencing a life of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

EQUIPPING AT-RISK YOUTH WITH SKILLS ON AND OFF THE COURT

A Saturday basketball clinic taught dozens of Alaska youth more than just the basic ball handling skills of the game. IOCC hosted one-day youth basketball and mentoring clinics in Anchorage and Napaskiak to introduce the at-risk youth to positive role models through the game of basketball and taught them how to build positive practices into their lives.

Substance abuse among Alaska Native youth is double the national average. At the same time, the majority of Orthodox priests in Alaska are Alaska Natives. IOCC is working with OCA Diocese of Sitka and Alaska and St. Herman Orthodox Seminary in Kodiak to equip seminarians and clergy in substance abuse prevention efforts that will reach some of the most remote Alaskan villages. The clinic provided an ideal outlet to engage the youth in a positive way about topics that are critical to leading healthy lives.

Retired professional and college players Andrew Cladis, Andrew Snelgrove and Patrick Johnson volunteered as mentors. "The reason I got into coaching was to impact young people, and the opportunity to connect with at-risk kids and hopefully give them some positive messages to take forward in their lives was a no-brainer for me," said Johnson, who played for Duke University and is now head basketball coach at Citrus College in California. Andrew Cladis, a former pro in Europe, added, "Basketball teaches qualities of character like working hard and handling adversity, and seeing these young people demonstrate these traits, even in small ways during the clinics made this a success."



Michael Dimneer/IOCC

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian relief 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.



News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.



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FRESH FOOD PROGRAM NOURISHES BODIES AND HOPES OF GREECE'S FAMILIES



Annie Angeli for IOCC

When Evi, 45, finished law school decades ago, she had imagined her life would be much different than what it is today. She established her career at a respected law firm in Athens and was able to set aside savings for the future. Then the country's economy went into a freefall and left Evi without a job and rapidly shrinking savings. "I haven't received a paycheck since 2013," said Evi. "I have looked everywhere for a job, but law offices won't even consider me at my age. I've even applied at supermarkets but they tell me they have thousands of applicants. At this stage, I will do almost anything."

Today, the divorced mother and her son, Christos, 8, live on whatever her parents can spare from their small pensions and the food assistance they receive from IOCC through local relief partner, Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece.

Evi is among more than 9,000 vulnerable people who receive food assistance from IOCC each month. Families and elderly in need receive assistance through Orthodox parishes and food banks

in the metropolitan Athens area where parcels of dry food items, and prepaid grocery cards allow families with young children to buy locally sourced produce, eggs, chicken, and dairy products.

The monthly food parcels and grocery cards Evi receives keep her hopeful about her son's well-being. "Without your help we would be hungry," said Evi as she looked at her son, a robust, dark-haired boy with a winning smile. "Christos has fresh milk, yogurt, chicken, fruits and vegetables along with the dry goods we get every month. And you see how tall he is."

IOCC CLINICS HELP ETHIOPIANS GAIN FOOTING AGAINST DISABLING DISEASE

Married at 12 and pregnant at 16, Yekul was destined to lead a quiet life as a wife and mother in rural Ethiopia. When her feet and legs began to swell from a disfiguring condition called podoconiosis, or podo, Yekul's husband sent her back to her parents. They too turned Yekul out after failing to marry her off to someone else. Even Yekul's friends rejected her for fear that podo was contagious. Alone and with a small child, Yekul struggled to survive for three years as her condition grew worse. Walking became more difficult each day.

Yekul learned of a podo clinic in Debre Markos run by IOCC and sought care there. After one month of receiving disinfectant foot baths, pressure dressings and massage treatments, the swelling in her feet and legs began to subside. For the first time in years, Yekul could walk without pain. Along with treatment came education on how to prevent podo. Yekul learned that walking barefoot on silica-rich soil prevalent across highland regions of Ethiopia triggered the problem, and that keeping her feet washed and wearing shoes would protect them against this disabling disease. Now Yekul makes sure that her daughter Enatnesh, 4, is never without shoes on her feet, and never has to suffer as she did.



Jake Lyell

ILLUMINATING OUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN THE NEW YEAR

The month of September represents the beginning of the ecclesiastical year. As we well know, this month we also take up again the activities interrupted by the summer: children and young people find themselves at their school desks, and older folks at their accustomed occupations.

The new Church year is marked by two great celebrations: Birth of the Theotokos and Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Birth of the Theotokos, the first royal feast of the ecclesiastical year, is dedicated to that most pure human being, she who received at her breast God Who was incarnated for our salvation. The second feast day, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, reminds us of the significance of that incarnation and sacrifice for us.

In His secret conversation with Nicodemus, the Savior Himself reveals the necessity of His Sacrifice: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). The lifting up of the Savior on the Cross means our being lifted up toward God the Father, our being offered up to God in the desire to obtain eternal life. Our life in isolation, separated from God, can only be limited to this earth and the joys it can bring. Life in communion with God bears the seal of eternity. This is not only because of the fact that after this earthly life we will be in eternity with God, but also because already during this life we partake of boundless heavenly joys. It is in this thirst for eternity that we reveal the true image of God. Our gaze directed at the Savior lifted up on the Cross is the evidence of the fact that we are in tune with God, and of our desire that we might also be lifted up and have a foretaste of eternal life.

Archbishop Nicolae

Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas



George Marki/IOCC

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Dimitrie Djucic/IOCC

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