

FOCUS

NORTH + AMERICA



2025 Annual Impact Report

Our Mission:

FOCUS unites Orthodox Christians to reveal Christ's love through service that restores dignity, transforms lives, and builds community.

Our Vision:

We envision a Church known for love in action—where serving the poor reveals the living presence of Christ to the world.

Our Values:

- ✦ Hospitality
- ✦ Excellence
- ✦ Authenticity
- ✦ Relationship
- ✦ Transparency



Dear Friend of FOCUS,

By God's grace, and with your love and support, the ministry of FOCUS has grown significantly over the past few years.

Yet as we grow, we have to avoid the temptation to see this as just another organization looking to expand its work. Because FOCUS isn't just another nonprofit.

Too many people don't know where their next meal will come from. Too many people don't have a safe place to sleep tonight. Too many people are at the mercy of the elements: sweltering in the summer and freezing in the winter. Beyond the obvious material consequences of need, the sting of poverty also obscures our view of Christ's love.

That's why FOCUS unites Orthodox Christians to reveal Christ's love through service that restores dignity, transforms lives, and builds community. Whether we are inviting people to share a meal or offering them a safe and comfortable place to sleep, FOCUS is making manifest the reality that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" The ministry of FOCUS makes the Lord's invisible love visible to all.

FOCUS serves anyone and everyone who comes to us. We also serve alongside anyone and everyone who wants to help us alleviate the sting of poverty. This hospitality is important to us because we demonstrate Christ's unconditional love in who we help and how we work.

FOCUS leads this work because we envision a Church known for love in action—where serving the poor reveals the living presence of Christ to the world. We envision a world where people truly know that we are the Lord's disciples because of the love we both have and demonstrate for one another (John 13:35).

This ministry would not be possible without the Lord's grace and the truth of His Kingdom. Yet it also wouldn't be visible without you, without all of you gathered as the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve.

May the Lord continue to magnify this work for the glory of His name and the revelation of His love.

In Christ,



Brian Bullard
Chairman, Board of Directors



Steven Christoforou
Executive Director





This year, FOCUS unveils a renewed visual identity that reflects both who we have become and where we are going. Rooted in our mission, this updated brand brings together a unified logo, a refined color palette, and thoughtfully chosen typography to better express the heart of what we do: making Christ's love visible.

Drawing inspiration from the rich iconographic tradition of the Church, the color palette evokes depth, sacredness, and timeless beauty — subtly pointing beyond itself to the realities we are called to serve. The blues and reds evoke the colors that clothe Christ and the Theotokos; the golds evoke halos. Every element has been carefully designed to create harmony across our growing national network, so that whether encountered in Phoenix or Philadelphia, FOCUS speaks with one recognizable voice, grounded in purpose.

This new branding is more than a visual update. It is a reflection of a maturing ministry that continues to grow in reach while remaining faithful to its calling.



Love Made Visible.

FOCUS

NORTH + AMERICA

Where We Work



From a single, visionary beginning in 2009, FOCUS has grown into a national network of 13 Centers—each rooted in the same calling to make Christ’s love visible in communities across the country. What began with the faithful efforts of our founders and the early witness of ministries in places like Kansas City, Orange County, Minneapolis, and St. Louis has steadily taken shape through decades of prayerful expansion. From the stabilization of FOCUS Cleveland and the launch of FOCUS Detroit, to a renewed season of growth in recent years with new Centers in Cincinnati, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Bridgeport, and San Francisco, the movement has accelerated in both reach and impact. Today, FOCUS stands as a truly national ministry—one mission, lived out locally—serving neighbors in need while continuing to grow wherever the Church is called to respond.

2025 Impact Stats



\$1,163,450 worth of food



\$984,452 worth of clothing



139,178 meals served



117,117 pounds of food distributed



97,090 individual guests served



23,150 hours of service



8,351 volunteer opportunities



563 total education participants

“... the thing about FOCUS is that you never leave with doubt that you did God’s will.”

- Nicole & Daniel Turner

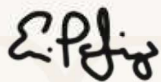


Consolidated Financials

Through God's grace and because of the generosity of our donors, FOCUS had a strong finish to the 2025 financial year. The balance of unrestricted cash and investments as of December 31, 2025 was \$2,716,520. Approximately \$2.4m of this balance has been allocated at the donors' requests to specific Centers or Programs within FOCUS.

Significant capital expenditures for 2025 included a property purchased in Cleveland which will be renovated into eight (8) apartments. This will expand the transitional housing program and free up emergency beds at the main house. Significant gifts included a bequest for Cleveland in the amount of \$233,306 (which will be distributed in installments over a ten year period), and matching donations to open new FOCUS Centers.

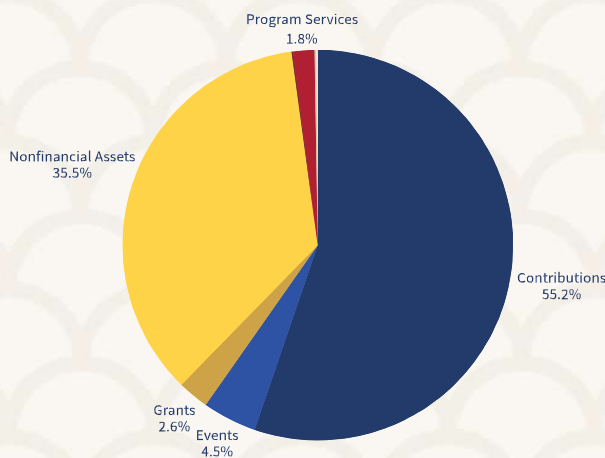
Because of the cyclical nature of donations, our goal is to have a cash surplus at the end of the year that is equal to at least 6-months of expenditures so that we can continue to operate during the lean revenue months of the next year and to account for any unforeseen circumstances that might arise. Expenditures (not including Gift In Kind) for 2025 were \$5,564,052 resulting in a desired cash reserve of approximately \$2.78 million. Given our unrestricted cash and investment balance of \$2.71 million at year end, this objective was nearly accomplished with a modest gap of about \$66k.



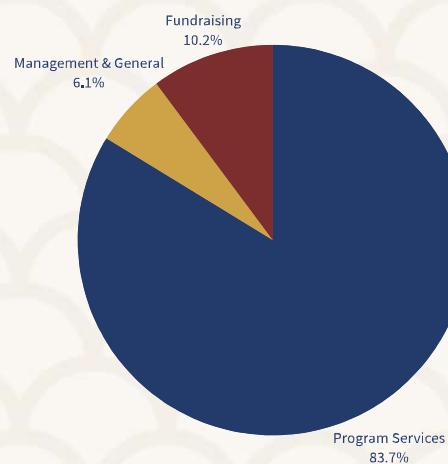
Eric Paljug
Chair, Finance
Committee



Stephanie Earl
Director of Finance



Revenues



Expenses



| Assets | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$ 921,051 | \$ 482,772 |
| Certificates of deposit | 1,794,402 | 2,140,572 |
| Accounts receivable | 121 | - |
| Pledges receivable | - | 99,989 |
| Other assets | 20,838 | 20,469 |
| Restricted cash | 554,946 | 551,623 |
| Beneficial interest in a trust | 170,651 | - |
| Assets held by community foundation | 129,639 | 99,729 |
| Finance lease right-of-use asset | 9,670 | 12,645 |
| Operating lease right-of-use asset | 66,956 | 57,639 |
| Property and equipment, net | 4,693,095 | 4,186,717 |
| Total Assets | \$ 8,361,369 | \$ 7,652,155 |
| Liabilities and Net Assets | | |
| Liabilities: | | |
| Accounts payable | \$ 5,820 | \$ 6,602 |
| Accrued liabilities | 240,750 | 137,311 |
| Finance lease liability | 10,333 | 13,069 |
| Operating lease liability | 67,224 | 57,944 |
| Total Liabilities | 324,127 | 214,926 |
| Net Assets: | | |
| Without donor restrictions | 4,482,296 | 3,885,606 |
| With donor restrictions | 3,554,946 | 3,551,623 |
| Total Net Assets | 8,037,242 | 7,437,229 |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | \$ 8,361,369 | \$ 7,652,155 |



Love Made Visible.



| | Without Donor Restrictions | With Donor Restrictions | Total |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Revenues: | | | |
| Contributed revenue: | | | |
| Contributions | \$ 3,072,573 | \$ 290,147 | \$ 3,362,720 |
| Events | 273,820 | - | 273,820 |
| Grants | 149,354 | 7,500 | 156,854 |
| Contributions of nonfinancial assets | 2,164,265 | - | 2,164,265 |
| Total contributed revenue | 5,660,012 | 297,647 | 5,957,659 |
| Earned revenue: | | | |
| Registration fees | 6,783 | - | 6,783 |
| Program services income | 107,183 | - | 107,183 |
| Other income | 9,597 | - | 9,597 |
| Total earned revenue | 123,563 | - | 123,563 |
| Gain (loss) on disposal of asset | 6,852 | - | 6,852 |
| Net assets released from restrictions | 261,037 | (261,037) | - |
| Total revenues | 6,051,464 | 36,610 | 6,088,074 |
| Expenses: | | | |
| Program services | 4,658,763 | - | 4,658,763 |
| Management and general | 338,539 | - | 338,539 |
| Fundraising | 566,750 | - | 566,750 |
| Total expenses | 5,564,052 | - | 5,564,052 |
| Change in Net Assets from Operations | 487,412 | 36,610 | 524,022 |
| Non-Operating Gains and Losses: | | | |
| Investment income | 109,278 | 6,037 | 115,315 |
| Change in value of beneficial interest | - | (39,324) | (39,324) |
| Total non-operating changes in net assets | 109,278 | (33,287) | 75,991 |
| Total Change in Net Assets | 596,690 | 3,323 | 600,013 |
| Net Assets: | | | |
| Beginning of year | 3,885,606 | 3,551,623 | 7,437,229 |
| End of year | \$ 4,482,296 | \$ 3,554,946 | \$ 8,037,242 |

FOCUS

+ ATLANTA +

Center Director: Ashton Walker

Services: Community Meals, Food Distribution, Clothing and Personal Hygiene Distribution, and Partnership with Local Nonprofits.

Food

Serves 2 ½ meals every weekday:

- coffee and pastries;
- a hot breakfast; and
- a hearty lunch which guests are given to take with them at the conclusion of daily service

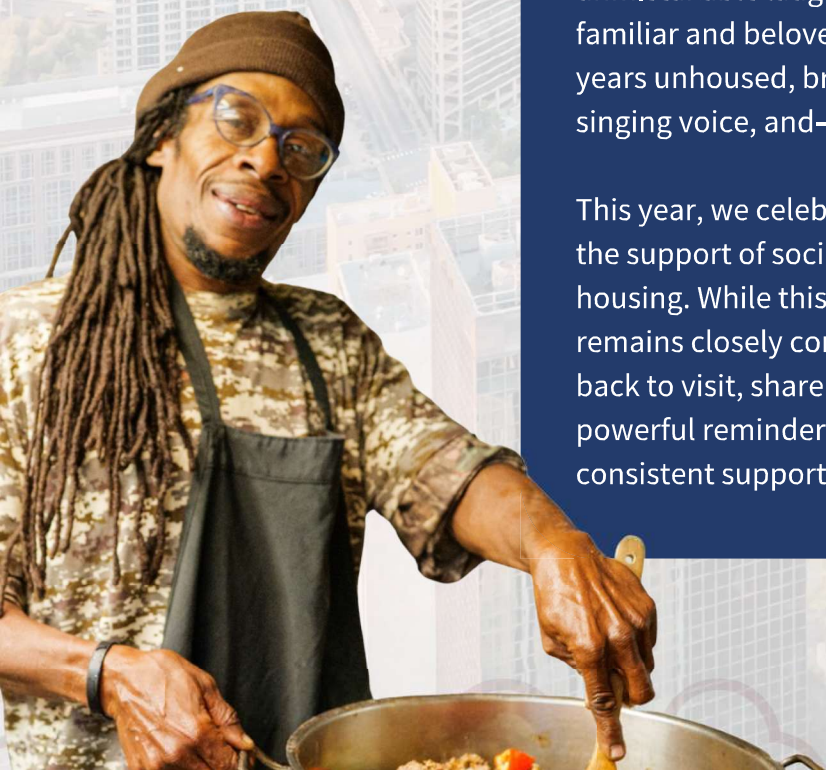
Local Partnerships

FOCUS Atlanta also partners with other local nonprofits to offer a variety of services, such as:

- haircuts;
- a weekly mobile health clinic;
- weekly shower truck;
- foot care clinic;
- mail service; and
- daily social workers



 **13,583 Meals Served in 2025**



Guest Highlight: Jimmy Davis

Originally from Kansas City, Jimmy Davis, 64, is known for his unmistakable laugh and having a story ready for every moment. A familiar and beloved presence in our community, Jimmy spent several years unhoused, bringing joy to those around him with his warmth, his singing voice, and—by reputation—a remarkable talent on the guitar.

This year, we celebrate a meaningful milestone in Jimmy's journey. With the support of social workers from Mercy Care, he has secured stable housing. While this new chapter marks a significant step forward, Jimmy remains closely connected to the community—still making the long trip back to visit, share a meal, and lift spirits with his presence. His story is a powerful reminder of what's possible through compassionate care and consistent support.

Center Director: Linda Kolton

Services: Community Meals, Food Distribution, Clothing and Toy Distribution in Partnership with a Local School.

Volunteer Highlight: Jamison Dunne

“For me, serving with FOCUS is about more than meeting material needs—it is about living out our faith. Christ calls us to serve ‘the least of these,’ and FOCUS provides a concrete and communal way to answer that call. It has also strengthened our connection to our neighbors while deepening our unity within the Orthodox community.

“Though FOCUS Bridgeport is still in its early stages, its impact is already clear: families have been fed, and children have received toys to celebrate Christmas. It has helped lighten the load for parents during the pause in SNAP funding, and just as importantly, it has strengthened our Orthodox community. Looking ahead, I am excited to help FOCUS Bridgeport continue to expand its reach—developing a consistent meals program, engaging in other ministries and building lasting relationships within the community.

“I remain involved because I have seen firsthand the difference this work makes—not only in the lives of the families we serve, but in our own lives as Orthodox Christians.”



Food

FOCUS Bridgeport was designated an official FOCUS Center in late 2025 as part of our New Center Development process and it is currently establishing a rhythm of service with monthly community meals.

Local Partnerships

FOCUS Bridgeport partners with Beardsley School to provide support for students in need, making Christ’s love visible for kids in the greater Bridgeport area.

Center Director: Seth DuCasse

Services: Community Meals, Food Pantry, Warming/Cooling Centers, and Local Events.

Food

- Four hot meals per month
- Weekly food pantries
- Annual Thanksgiving & Memorial Day meals
- Christmas ham giveaway

Shelter

- Warming & Cooling Centers during the 14 coldest and 14 hottest days of the year

Local Partnership

- Backpack drive & refresh twice a year in collaboration with Norwood Elementary School

In 2025 we:

- 🍽️ **Served 3,387 guests**
- 🍽️ **Prepared 5,978 meals**
- 🍽️ **Distributed \$52,923.13 worth of food**

Guest Highlight: Clifford, Mike, Robert, and Sandy

Clifford, Mike, Robert, and Sandy have been long-time friends in the Norwood area. They have made our meal services at Christ the Savior in Norwood a regular part of their schedule to get together and enjoy a meal. They even call on each other to check in and make sure they will all be present at meals to see each other.



Center Director: Kirk Ries

Services: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Community Meals, Clothing and Personal Hygiene Distribution, and Employment Opportunities.



+ CLEVELAND - ST. HERMAN HOUSE +

Guest Highlight: Chris Hall

“When I arrived at FOCUS Cleveland in the Spring of 2024, I was physically and spiritually broken. Having just had vascular surgery and being homeless, I needed a safe place to stay while my body healed. My wife passed away in December of 2020, causing me to relapse back to opiate use. This led to being fired from my job and ultimately homelessness. FOCUS Cleveland allowed me time to recover from surgery and to battle my addiction. When I would stumble, I wasn’t told to leave, I was given solid advice in a mindful, caring manner. The work of FOCUS Cleveland was the best medicine I could find. I grabbed onto ‘I am my brother’s keeper’ with two hands and never let go. The admin staff here could see I was serious and helped me see the barriers I had erected over the years. I was able to utilize this advice while dealing with the community we serve, I am now working full-time and I have re-established my credentials as a State of Ohio certified Peer Supporter. Within the next few months, I hope to be living in my own apartment. Without FOCUS Cleveland and their staff, I can’t imagine where I would be today. I owe them a huge debt of gratitude.”



Shelter

FOCUS Cleveland provides:

- a 28-bed emergency shelter for men
- a 12-bed transitional house for men
- case management
- a resident services & referrals program
- a job & life skills program

Food

- Serves 3 hot meals every day for residents and the community
 - 55,999 meals per year
- Distributes grocery bags during the last five weekdays of each month to families with dependents



☼ Served 55,999 meals

☼ Had 2,110 volunteers

☼ Distributed \$118,254 worth of clothing and essentials

In 2025 we:

Center Director: Adam Murphy

Services: Community Meals, Food Distribution, Clothing and Personal Hygiene Distribution, and Partnership with a Local School.

Food

- 1st & 3rd Saturday of the month Feeding Ministry in cooperation with Oasis of Hope Christian Church
- Tuesday after school arts & crafts and dinner at Commonwealth Academy

Clothing & More!

- Outfitted for Good Free Clothing Store
- Christmas Basket Program
- Annual School Supply Collection
- “The Nest” Parents & Children’s Program



Volunteer Highlight: Alexandra

“I have the great opportunity to be partnered with FOCUS Detroit for my practicum education. This organization’s values of community, love, and faith have aligned with the values that I see for our future. Being a part of a bigger picture and fostering connections with others has been influential in my perspective and growth as a person. FOCUS Detroit is built by people who truly care, respect, and honor the dignity of each human life—something that is invaluable in our world today.”



In 2025 we:

☼ Served 4,800 Saturday Meals

☼ Distributed \$30,045 worth of clothing and hygiene products

☼ Provided 2,400 meals to school children

Center Director: Christine McDonald

Services: Community Meals, Food Pantry, and Clothing Distribution.

FOCUS

+ GATEWAY CITY +

Volunteer Highlight: “Anonymous”

“I keep coming back to volunteer because I've encountered Christ at FOCUS. It wasn't immediate, the first week or necessarily every week. But in time, I've had interactions that left me feeling at peace and connected to the guest I was talking with. I had heard that we should see Christ in everyone we meet and I thought I knew what that meant and that I was doing it. But I've had experiences interacting with guests at FOCUS that when I left, I felt different inside and thought 'that's what it means to really see Christ in others.' Serving at FOCUS has pushed me to look deeply inside myself and examine my soul.”



Food, Clothing, and More!

- FOCUS Gateway City (St. Louis, MO) runs Apostles Community Kitchen
 - Sunday Suppers - first 3 Sundays of the month where warm meals are served
 - Warm Breakfast every Wednesday
- Other services include:
 - St. Xenia's Closet - clothes and blankets open during Sunday Supper
 - St. Elijah's Bus Tickets - Metro bus tickets and Greyhound long distance
 - St. Elias Haircuts & Hygiene - during Sunday Supper
 - Providing bicycles & repair to those in need of transportation

In 2025 we:

✿ Distributed \$76,300 worth of food

✿ Served 5,473 meals

✿ Had 914 volunteers serve for 2,348 hours



Center Director: Christine Nuñez

Services: Resource and Community Center for Mothers and Children.



Guest Highlight: "Sylvia"

"The teacher at my son's school first told me about FOCUS. She asked me, 'Ms. Sylvia, do you want some help with diapers and children's items?' I couldn't believe it. I asked, 'Is it trustworthy?' The teacher said, 'Yes, it is.' At the time, I had no job, I needed help with diapers. My husband had been taken away from our family. I was in a depression. But when I went to FOCUS and received diapers and wipes, attended classes and got to know the other moms, I've felt nothing but love and affection when I am here. This place has been something sent from God for me and my children, a gift from God - FOCUS came into my life just at the right time. Not a minute too soon, or too late. May God multiply his blessings for those who help to support FOCUS!"

Motherhood & Family Support

- Bi-monthly diaper, wipes, hygiene and infant/children's clothing distribution
- Community-building coffee socials and events to build connections between mothers
- All clients receive a first visit "Layette" with diapers, wipes, hygiene items plus weekly opportunities to shop at The Nest Boutique, a free store in our office for all mothers who participate in the program
- Spanish and English Educational classes such as ESL, parenting, nutrition, carseat safety and distribution and more all taught by local partners and volunteers
- Referrals to partner organizations for help with childcare, postpartum support, rental assistance, government support programs, and more

✿ **\$21,859.50 Worth of Resources Distributed**



FOCUS

+ LOS ANGELES +

Center Director: Sasha Dempsey

Services: Food Distribution, Fire Relief, Homeless & Family Outreach.

Food

- Twice monthly food distribution at St. Nicholas (downtown LA) and once monthly at St. Matthew (Torrance) in partnership with the LA Regional Food Bank

Clothing & More!

- Winter supply homeless backpack program at St. Steven Serbian Orthodox Cathedral.
- Continued essential support for LA Fire victims

In 2025 we:

- ✦ Distributed **\$234,570.45** worth of food
- ✦ Distributed **\$39,225** worth of clothing & home goods
- ✦ Served **9,252** individuals
- ✦ Had **591** volunteers serve for **2,006** hours

Guest Highlight: “Elijah”

“My name is Elijah, and my grandma Mary and I have been coming to the food distributions since August. This support has truly meant so much to us and has helped us in many ways. FOCUS at St. Matthew’s is something we know we can count on—it’s a place where we feel cared for.”



Center Director: Dustin Hertzog

Services: Basic needs provisions like a Clothes Closet, Food Shelf, Meals throughout the week.

Guest Highlight: Will & Katy Dog

Will—known and loved by many volunteers, often alongside his dog Katy—has endured an extraordinary series of hardships. After years of unstable housing, the garage he was living in burned down. Not long after securing an apartment, it was condemned. Soon after, he slipped on ice and broke two ribs—an injury that led to the discovery of advanced bladder cancer. Within days, he underwent emergency surgery. During his recovery, he also required the amputation of a toe due to gangrene.

Through it all, Will has remained remarkably positive. With wraparound support, he and Katy were placed in shelter, he was given a phone to stay connected to care and family, and we've been able to provide basic essentials along the way. He is now preparing for a second surgery for full bladder removal. Despite everything, Will's spirit has not wavered. In his own words: ***“Thank you for your kindness—I'm really starting to like myself again.”***



Food, Clothing, and More!

- Clothes Closet 3x per week
- Meals 5x per week
- Food Shelf
- Grocery Delivery
- On-demand requests
- Laundry Vouchers
- Rental & Utility Assistance

In 2025 we:

- ⊕ Gave 44,682 lbs. of groceries
- ⊕ Distributed \$555,854 worth of clothing & hygiene items
- ⊕ Served 35,401 meals
- ⊕ Provided \$10,959 in Emergency Assistance
- ⊕ Pre-paid 184 loads of laundry



Center Director: Valeska Hall

Services: Food, Clothing, and Essential Item Distribution.

Food, Clothing, and More!

- Monthly Service Rhythm:
 - 1st Saturday: Pack senior food boxes (CAP OC)
 - 2nd Sunday: Serve ~240 meals (Yale Navigation Center)
 - 2nd Wednesday: Pack & distribute food (FOCUS warehouse + local school)
 - 3rd Saturday: Open Food Pantry
- Ongoing: Clothing & essentials for local pregnancy centers
- Annual Ministries:
 - Back-to-School backpacks (low-income children)
 - Outreach backpacks (unhoused neighbors)
 - Thanksgiving Grocery Giveaway (families in need)



Volunteer Highlight: Yvette Palafox

“Volunteering with FOCUS Orange County has become one of the most meaningful parts of my life this past year. I first came to FOCUS looking for connection while I was new to the Church, and I ended up finding something far more meaningful than I ever expected. One of the ways I’ve experienced this most deeply is through volunteering at our food distribution events. During these events, I am especially touched by the small moments I get to share with each person. I’ve had the honor of seeing the smiles, the gratitude, and the quiet relief of not having to worry about their next meal. Welcoming familiar faces month after month, and even knowing some families by name now, has made this service feel deeply personal. Through FOCUS, I’ve witnessed the beauty of service, the dignity of those we serve, and the power of small acts of love.”

In 2025 we:

✿ **Distributed**
58,755 lbs. of food

✿ **Served 2,395**
meals

✿ **Volunteered**
1,255 hours



Center Director: John Pogas

Services: Food and Essential Item Distribution.



Volunteer Highlight: Nicholas Zarynow

Nicholas first volunteered with FOCUS Philadelphia in November. At the time he noted how chilly it was and how it was just going to get colder as Winter set in. He was deeply concerned for those living in poverty in Philadelphia. Instead of shrugging off the feeling, Nicholas did something. He reached out to his neighbors, fellow Parishioners and a neighboring Parish. He told them his story, the impact that FOCUS had on him and the impact FOCUS Philadelphia was having on the community. He then went a step further and asked EVERYONE to support his Saint Nicholas Day coat drive. By the grace of God (and good parenting) Nicholas collected 170 coats, 72 hats, 60 pairs of gloves, 42 blankets, 30 sweaters, and 15 pairs of new socks.

In 2025 we:

☞ Served over
4,400 meals

☞ Volunteered over
1,500 hours

Food & Essential Care Items

- Meals on Wednesday nights in Norristown, PA and Thursday nights in Philadelphia
 - We serve a hot entree, assorted sandwiches, hard boiled eggs, fruit, snacks and beverages (hot chocolate in the colder months). We also provide clothing, personal care kits and emergency First Aid services.



Food, Clothing, and More!

- FOCUS Phoenix hosts services at local parks every Saturday of the month including:
 - Hot Meals by “Flavors of Love”
 - Pet Food & Supplies
 - Clothing
- Thursday services include assisting with the free shower program at HOPE Church

Guest Highlight: David

David is a man who hasn't always lived on the streets, but he has always had to learn how to survive in them. Being brought up in the belly of poverty is never an easy task, though David has managed to do so without losing the kindness deep within his heart. His Love for Christ is evident each time he rushes to lend a helping hand to any of his fellow neighbors in need. He is known to fix bicycles, cut hair, and even work on mechanical issues for free in the surrounding area. He recently approached our volunteers bursting with excitement, he had recently found employment but was in desperate need of work boots. He said, “As soon as I got a list of items I needed for work, I couldn't wait to see FOCUS at the park on Saturday. I knew in my heart that if I asked with faith for a pair of work boots, then the amazing volunteers at FOCUS Phoenix would make it happen.” We are humbled to be able to say that not only was FOCUS Phoenix able to supply David with brand new work boots, we also provided him with brand new clothes to wear to his new job. The change we have witnessed in David firsthand is one of the many reasons why we serve every week here at FOCUS Phoenix.

In 2025 we:

✧ Handed out 6,000 water bottles, 700 pairs of socks, 600 shirts, 400 pairs of pants, and more!

✧ Gave out \$48,281 in clothing, hygiene items, and haircuts

✧ Served over 500 guests

✧ Volunteered 410 hours



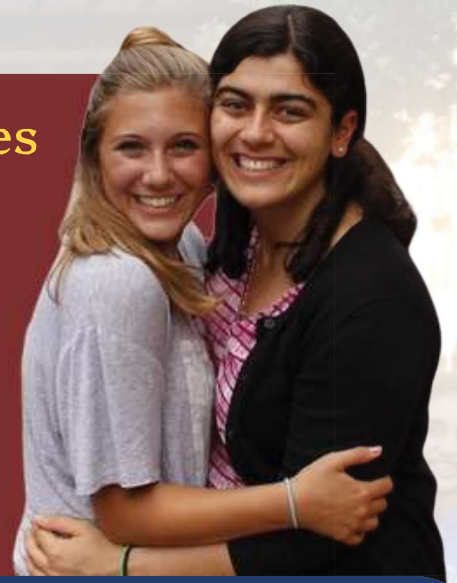


Program Director: Wadeed Fakhoury

Services: Formative opportunities for youth and young adults centered around service.

Individual, Parish, and Group Opportunities

- YES serves youth and young adults through:
 - The YES Internship Experience (Remote),
 - The YES Series (Remote), and
 - The YES Servant Leadership Gathering
- YES also serves parishes and groups through:
 - YES Trips for College Students, Young Adults, and Parishes,
 - National Programs (Back to School Backpacks, etc.)



YES Participant Highlight: Cecelia

“YES gave me more than a weekend experience. It gave me a safe, structured, spiritually rich environment to grow into my faith and my identity as an Orthodox Christian.

“After that first trip, I stayed connected through YES programs and mentorship. The leaders continued to guide me—teaching me how to see the world differently. They showed me how to identify needs in a community. How to notice what is missing. How to approach those gaps with humility instead of superiority.

“Through YES, I learned that serving is not about being impressive. It’s about being attentive. It’s about asking, ‘Where could God enter here?’ Over time, that way of seeing has shaped who I am.”

2025 Impact:

- ◊ **11 YES Trips**
- ◊ **125 Series Participants**
- ◊ **131 Youth Served**
- ◊ **10 YES Interns**
- ◊ **2,485 Backpacks Distributed**
- ◊ **1,716 School Supply Kits Distributed**



New Center Development: Expanding the Mission of Service

FOCUS Centers are community-based hubs where Orthodox Christians come together to make Christ's love visible by uniting Orthodox Christians to serve the poor through service that restores dignity, transforms lives, and builds community. FOCUS North America, a ministry affiliated with the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America, mobilizes Orthodox communities across the country to establish new Centers that serve our neighbors in need.

How are new FOCUS Centers developed?

Each new FOCUS Center is grounded in strong collaboration between local parishes. When a city demonstrates readiness and broad pan-Orthodox support, FOCUS guides clergy and lay leaders through a structured development process. Key steps include:

- **Local discernment:** Initial conversations to assess community needs and readiness to officially begin the Center development process.
- **Kickoff Meeting:** A city-wide meeting that brings together Orthodox clergy and laity to learn about the vision of FOCUS and begin organizing locally, usually in January.
- **Exploratory Committee:** A volunteer team from multiple parishes that meets regularly to answer three key questions necessary to establish a new FOCUS Center:
 - What ministry is our community called to offer?
 - Where should it take place?
 - How will it be sustainably supported?
- **Center launch:** Once programs are defined, a location is identified, and funding is secured (usually by late summer / early fall), the FOCUS Board can then formally designate the Center, which allows us to hire the Center Director and begin the ministry.



2025 Highlights: FOCUS successfully established two new Centers through this process:

- **Bridgeport, CT (Exploratory Committee: 30 members from 10 parishes)**
- **San Francisco, CA (Exploratory Committee: 24 members from 8 parishes)**

Looking Ahead to 2026: Exploratory Committees are working in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area (DMV); Portland, OR; and San Diego, CA with additional Center development in Grand Rapids, MI and West Central Pennsylvania.

A National Movement of Compassion

For Despina Kartson, generosity is not simply about giving—it is about living out faith through compassion, hospitality, and personal responsibility.

As Chief Marketing Officer of a major New York City law firm with more than 1,100 attorneys, Despina leads in a demanding environment. Yet service and philanthropy remain central to her life, shaped by a belief that those who have been blessed are called to care for others.

Her connection to FOCUS North America began in her hometown of Cleveland at St. Herman House. Over time, she witnessed the ministry grow from a local outreach to become an important part of the growing national movement of FOCUS—but what impacted her most was the people.

During business trips, she made time to volunteer, serving meals and connecting with guests—experiences that left a lasting impression. *“The joy of being present during dinner, experiencing the gratitude of the guests... has left an indelible impression on me.”*

That connection led to serving on the FOCUS North America Board of Directors, which she sees as a powerful way to help advance the ministry of FOCUS nationwide.

“It’s one of the best ways to affirm belief in an organization’s mission.”

Despina is drawn to FOCUS’ Christ-centered approach to service, welcoming all with dignity and compassion.

Her understanding of generosity is rooted in Luke 12:48: “To whom much is given, much is required.” Her giving is intentional—focused on organizations whose values align with her own and whose impact is tangible.

What excites her most is FOCUS’ continued growth. With Centers across the country, the ministry is expanding its reach and making the Orthodox faith known through love in action.

“Expansion into cities across the country elevates the awareness of FOCUS and the Orthodox faith and, most importantly, increases the number of lives we touch.”

In a time of growing need, Despina believes this work is more important than ever. Inspired by Mother Teresa’s words—“If you cannot feed 100 people, then feed just one”—she reminds us: *“All of us can find it in our hearts to feed at least one person.”*

Looking ahead, she hopes FOCUS will continue to grow, bringing hope and dignity to more communities—and that all who encounter it will understand its heart: *“FOCUS serves those in need with love, compassion, and without judgment.”*





The Circle of St. Basil the Great is FOCUS North America's monthly donor society—made up of faithful partners who sustain the work of mercy, hospitality, and human dignity all year long.

Inspired by St Basil the Great, whose life embodied radical love for the poor and vulnerable, members of this Circle help make FOCUS' mission possible through consistent, prayerful support. St. Basil believed that care for those in need is a shared responsibility of the whole Church and that our resources are entrusted to us so that no one is forgotten.

Monthly gifts through the Circle of St. Basil the Great provide the steady foundation that allows FOCUS to:

- Serve individuals and families with dignity and compassion
- Sustain FOCUS Centers and programs across North America
- Respond quickly to urgent needs in our communities
- Build long-term, relational support for those we serve

By joining the Circle of St. Basil the Great, you help strengthen the Church's response to poverty, isolation, and need—through faithful, sustained service grounded in Orthodox Christian love.

Society Levels:

- \$50/month (\$600/year)
 - Invitation to annual national virtual event
 - Branded seed packet of basil seeds to give to someone in need or plant in your garden
- \$100/month (\$1,200/year)
 - Invitation to annual national virtual event
 - Physical Annual Report
 - Branded seed packet of basil seeds to give to someone in need or plant in your garden
- \$500/month (\$6,000/year)
 - Invitation to annual national virtual event
 - Physical Annual Report
 - Branded seed packet of basil seeds to give to someone in need or plant in your garden
 - Virtual Town Hall with Executive Director
- \$1,000/month (\$12,000/year)
 - Invitation to annual national virtual event
 - Physical Annual Report
 - Branded seed packet of basil seeds to give to someone in need or plant in your garden
 - Virtual Town Hall with Executive Director
 - Personal visit with Executive Director, as able

Learn more by visiting:

focusna.org

A Gift That Keeps Serving.

Your planned gift to FOCUS North America becomes part of a legacy of love—helping to make Christ’s love visible for generations to come.

Include FOCUS in your legacy planning.

Contact Director of Development, Sarah Werner Popovici, to learn more!

swerner@focusna.org

The FOCUS Growth Endowment

FOCUS North America is preparing to establish the FOCUS Growth Endowment — a permanent legacy fund designed to support the long-term sustainability, growth, and mission impact of FOCUS for generations to come.

As FOCUS continues working toward the vision of expanding into new communities across North America, the FOCUS Growth Endowment will serve as the future home for planned and legacy gifts that help secure this mission for decades ahead. Through bequests, beneficiary designations, charitable distributions, appreciated assets, and other legacy giving opportunities, supporters will have the opportunity to leave a lasting impact on the future of Orthodox Christian service and outreach.

Future distributions from the Endowment are anticipated to help launch new FOCUS Centers, strengthen existing ministries, support underserved communities, and sustain the national infrastructure necessary for continued growth and stability.

Whether you are interested in including FOCUS in your estate plans, exploring an endowed gift, or learning more about legacy giving opportunities, we would be honored to begin the conversation.

To learn more, please contact Sarah Werner Popovici: swerner@focusna.org

FOCUS

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FOCUS North America is a ministry affiliated with the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

