# SAINT BASIL ACADEMY

AN ORTHODOX HOME SERVING CHILDREN IN NEED We teach, We heal, We bring the Light of Christ to young lives

Report to the 40<sup>th</sup> Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress

## History

Located in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains in historic Garrison, New York, Saint Basil Academy commands a dramatic view of the Hudson River Valley and the West Point Military Academy.

Archbishop Athenagoras, of blessed memory, founded Saint Basil Academy in 1944 with the valuable assistance of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society. In March of 1944, after two years of Vasilopita celebrations, Philoptochos purchased the 400-acre Jacob Ruppert estate for \$55,000. In 1976 a parcel of land encompassing primarily marshland was sold to the Audubon Society.

Archbishop Athenagoras dreamed of establishing an orphanage or children's home ever since he arrived in the United States in 1931. The Academy was named for Saint Basil, who was the founder of many orphanages, hospitals and homes for the elderly in fourth century Caesarea in Asia Minor. He is considered one of the greatest philanthropists in the Church and the founder of the modern day hospital concept.

Today, Saint Basil Academy is licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. It is the Greek Orthodox child-care institution for Orthodox children in need in America

The AHEPA School Building has in recent years taken on a new and exciting mission. Built in 1962 to accommodate the original school and Teacher's College, the building now houses the National Ministries Department of Youth, The Ionian Village, Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism and the newly formed Archdiocese Center for Family Care. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has expanded to the scenic and majestic Hudson River Valley campus of Saint Basil Academy.

## **Educational Programs**

Education is an essential part of life at the Academy. Whether the youngster is a high achiever academically or has special education needs, each child is dealt with as an individual. Their abilities are examined and the appropriate program is structured for each resident

The younger children, until eighth grade, attend Bishop Dunn Memorial School in Newburgh, New York. The high school children grades ninth through twelfth attend James I. O'Neill High School in Highland Falls or Haldane in Cold Spring, New York. The children participate in school sports, drama, clubs, school trips and other extra curricular activities.

## **Medical Care**

Every child is under the care of a local pediatrician. With the staff registered nurse, all children are given the appropriate physical exams, and inoculations. All are cared for equally and offered the proper, appropriate and best medical attention available.

## **Emotional Care**

Clinicians provide that very special relationship with Saint Basil children. All inquiries and questions relating to admissions and programs at Saint Basil are channeled to the Director of Clinical Services. Inquiries are received from parents, family, friends, parish priests and mental health agencies.

The Clinical staff includes clinicians who have attained at least a Master's degree, a Registered Nurse, graduate student interns and a consulting child psychiatrist.

Clinicians complete a comprehensive and thorough report justifying the need for placement of all children. They provide family counseling, sibling group counseling and workshops in the dorms. The clinician is additionally responsible for children's academic and behavior growth at school. They attend 'parent' conferences, team meetings, Committee on Special Education meetings, and 504 Hearings. Clinicians consult with school administrators, social workers and psychologists. They have sat with children in the doctors' offices, opened bank accounts, attended Little League games, helped attain medical insurance and have taken children out for lunch.

#### **Dental Care**

Established in 1999, the Demetrios & Georgia Kaloidis Dental Clinic provides a home for volunteer Greek American dentists who assist with the dental care of the children. They are provided annual check-ups, teeth cleanings and any other dental services needed for the children of the Academy. The clinic is fully outfitted with all the equipment and all the supplies necessary for dental needs. This is a blessing for the children and their physical well-being.

## **Spiritual Life**

The Chapel is central to the life of the children. It symbolizes the religious life, spiritual education and nurturing of the children. This is what makes Saint Basil Academy a totally unique residential child-care institution. They truly grow in their faith, belief and love of God.

The Chapel, which was built by William Chirgotis of blessed memory in 1985, is used on weekdays for a brief vesper service followed by a teaching sermon for the children and staff of the Academy and, of course, Sunday Divine Liturgies.

Retreats for both GOYA and adults are hosted on a regular basis throughout the year. A small local constituency of parishioners join the children to participate in the Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings which complements the Saint Basil "family". Saint Basil Academy is a holy place. In addition to having the gravesite of Archbishop Michael, there is the Zoodochos Peghe (Life Giving Fountain) shrine, the Saint Dionysios Chapel, and the Saint Iakovos Chapel.

## **Residential Life**

The children have twenty-four hour residential counselors when not in school. The daily schedule includes study time in the Learning Center, a weekday Chapel Service, recreation, chores, clean up and sleep. The weekends include excursions to local parishes, recreation on campus and organized team sports through the local recreation department. On a monthly basis young adult volunteers plan unique activities, such as pumpkin picking, bowling and gingerbread house making.

## **Recreational Program**

The Athletic Field, created by the Philoptochos Sisterhood of Saint Basil, is located on the Southern part of the campus. Weather permitting, the children take advantage of the various sports offered. Along with the athletic fields, we have the Pan-Arcadian Gym, a versatile building. It is central to the year round recreational needs of the children, having a basketball court and an exercise and weight room.

The Pan-Arcadian Gym also has the availability to be used as an auditorium. Capable of holding 200 people, it is the venue for the annual Christmas Pageant, Fashion Show and Vasilopita celebrations.

In 1983, The Daughters of Penelope Pool was built and enclosed in 1985 by William Chirgotis of blessed memory. Swimming is one of the most healthful recreational activities for the children. All the children learn how to swim, and many of the high school and college age youngsters have obtained their lifeguard certification. The pool has many amenities, such as locker and shower rooms and offers local community organizations, like the American Red Cross, the opportunity to use the facilities for training classes

### **Bridge Program**

Recognizing the need to offer support and guidance to the post high school residents, the Bridge Program was created.

The Bridge Program at Saint Basil Academy provides a healthy and supportive environment for high school graduates. It helps to develop responsibility, organizational and social skills. Residents attend colleges and vocational programs and experience employment commitments.

The Bridge Program helps Greek Orthodox Christian young people develop the skills needed to successfully work and live independently.

Saint Basil Bridge Program Students			
Resident	Age	School/Job	Career Path
Christina K	22	Lasalle Univ.	Pre-Med
Stephanie	24	Guidance Counselor	Masters
Stella	25	Guidance Counselor	Masters
Andrew	21	Seton Hall	Sports Management
Eliud	21	Electrician	-
Sophia	21	Serendipity	Childhood education
Spiro	21	Baruch	Sports Management
Joseph	23	Boston College	Masters
Irakli	21	Rockland Cty. Com	Computer Science
Nancy	22	Newbury College	Journalism

### **Recent Events**

Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009 the First Lady of Cyprus, Mrs. Elsie Christofias, joined the children of the Academy for an afternoon visit. The children presented her with an icon of Saint Basil and a fall flower bouquet. The children's chorus offered a musical interlude. It was a memorable experience for all.

# Orthodox Youth Day—September 19th, 2009

Orthodox Youth Day is an annual event at the Academy. The Academy hosts a day of various recreational activities for children of all ages from ten different Orthodox Communities. Activities include swimming, soccer, kickball, basketball and pumpkin painting for the younger children. Youth Day takes advantage of the many facilities on campus, including the indoor swimming pool, gym, athletic fields, playground and recreation room. Youth Day brings Orthodox children and communities together to meet the children and learn more about the mission of Saint Basil Academy.

## **Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting**

Columbus Day weekend in October, Orthodox Scouts once again held their Annual Spiritual Retreat with more than 200 participants. The Orthodox Scouts will be returning in the Spring for a Camporee.

## **Summer Holiday**

Saint George Greek Orthodox Community in Ocean City, Maryland (a beach resort) hosted the children of Saint Basil to a weeklong summer vacation. For the fourth year in a row, this small community has given the children a beach holiday with housing, meals, and recreational activities directly on the beach of the Atlantic Ocean. For the new youngsters, this was the first time they had been on a vacation. Everyone enjoyed the week and are truly grateful to our extended family in Ocean City.

## **Upcoming Events at Saint Basil Academy**

- Commencement: A Celebration of Successes—June 19, 2010
- Youth Day—September 2010
  Children's Fashion Show & Luncheon—October 16, 2010
- Children's Christmas Pageant—December 11, 2010