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August 2018 Newsletter

A Word from our Vice President, George Yurchak

I hope all of you have had a great summer as the kids have started school and we get ready to start a new church year. In this issue we will highlight Sheila Yurchak on "Her Journey to Orthodoxy" as we see more and more converts at Holy Trinity. Holy Trinity continued to support the local libraries with their Summer Reading Program. Meri Ionescu our Romanian lady read in Romanian and our Greek ladies Soula Kiessling and Chrisanthe Beach read to the kids in Greek. Fr Paul and Presvytera Joanie came for the Dormition of the Theotokos services. Holy Trinity was asked to host 10 Ukrainian orphan boys and girls ages 8-15 for one day in August. We treated them to a wonderful day that they said felt like Disneyland to them. Many of our parishioners lent their time, money and talents to see to it that these children from the other side of the world could have a little sunshine in what may otherwise be a gloomy life.

My Journey to Orthodoxy – Sheila Hemenway-Yurchak



I began attending Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity when I first started dating my husband, George Yurchak. I had not been to a church service (except weddings and funerals) since I was fifteen. Initially I experienced a profound sadness during liturgy, probably a result of the recent deaths of my mother and first husband. I continued attending and found the parishioners to be warm and loving. They felt like a new family to me. The priest at that time was Fr Jim Karagas. We discovered we were all Beatles fans. George and I enjoyed visiting him and listening to The Beatles on his super stereo system. He cranked up the volume; shaking the walls and nearly blowing the roof off of his trailer on the church property.

These evenings made me want to know more about Orthodoxy and why their priests were so cool. Fr Jim performed our wonderful wedding ceremony in 2008. After he left, George and I spent many good times with Fr Stephan and Presvytera Annette, who also gave joy and enrichment to me. It took me several more soul searching years before Fr Dean chrismated me into the Orthodox faith. Eleni Vganges finally convinced me by simply saying, "What are you waiting for?" and became my Godmother and religious mentor. The people of Holy Trinity are my second family; loving, caring, generous and even cantankerous, and I love them.



Holy Trinity Helps Coast Libraries

Holy Trinity helped Orange Grove Public Library with its Summer Reading Program for kids. Our Romanian parishioner Meri Ionescu read a book to the kids in Romanian. They made bookmarks, paper boats, flowers and they sang a song. Meri provided cookies and cheese crackers. Two of our Greek parishioners, Soula Kiessling and Chrisanthe Beach read two books in Greek to the kids – Snow White and Little Red Riding Hood. They finished up with a Greek dance with Soula and Chrisanthe singing the song which they danced to and then passed out snacks to all the kids. The kids had a truly remarkable experience.



Dormition of the Theotokos

The Ladies of the Agape helped decorate the kouvouklion for the beautiful Dormition of the Theotokos Services. They were Sheila Yurchak, Olivia Wisniewski, Eleni Vganges, Karen Komenko, Virginia Freeman, Akaterina Vamvakas, Fanoula Christidis. Nancy Malek worked on the landscaping and flower beds and Caleb Bridges cut the grass to make everything look beautiful for the services. Fr Paul and Presvytera Joanie came from Florida for the Divine Liturgy and Lamentations.



Holy Trinity Hosts 10 Ukrainian Orphan Children

Holy Trinity hosted ten Ukrainian orphan children ages 8-15 on Saturday August 18. Many parishioners gave these kids a little sunshine in their life for one day that was filled with happiness. Roads of Hope, who fosters these orphans, asked for our help and brought them to Holy Trinity where Sheila Yurchak and Nancy Malek served



them a good ole American lunch of pizza, fruit and ice cream (which they really enjoyed). We then took them to Margaritaville Resort to the Escape Family Entertainment Center which seemed like Disneyland to them as you look at the joy in their faces. We asked and Margaritaville Resort helped give these kids the time of their lives by donating some of the cost for the afternoon. Thanks to Sheila and George Yurchak, Mike and Korina Bodisch, Jerry Strickland, Robert Brouillette, Virginia Freeman and Lily, and Natalia Petrovska who came to Margaritaville and helped show the Ukrainian orphans a good time.



After a fun afternoon we headed back to Holy Trinity for a delicious dinner served by Meri Ionescu and Eleni Vganges, which the orphans filled up on – chicken tenders, French fries, coleslaw, bread and Meri’s famous Romanian dessert. After dinner, Holy Trinity parishioners and a friend of Holy Trinity provided an evening of entertainment for the orphans. Eyler Coates played the Scottish bagpipes and a harp (the kids enjoyed the harp and played it afterwards). George and Sheila Yurchak did a Ukrainian dance and Nataliya Molsbee (our Ukrainian opera singer) sang two beautiful Ukrainian songs. Then Soula Kiessling, Chrisanthe Beach and

Kristen Beddoe danced three Greek dances for the orphans with some of them joining in the last dance. We finished the evening with gifts of Greek dancing skirts with bangles on them for each of the girls and soccer balls for each of the boys. WLOX-TV came over and did a wonderful story on the orphans and took many interviews. Since the orphans English was very limited, Natalia Petrovska provided the language interpretation. Many thanks to all those from Holy Trinity who helped make their day successful.

Said Nataliya Molsbee “Today was such an emotional evening. Ukrainian orphans visiting Holy Trinity and I was singing a couple of songs for them. It’s so painful to understand that all these children don’t have families, and the worst part that as soon as they are 16 they can no longer stay at the orphanage house and have to grow up fast on the streets.”





Said George Yurchak, “Holy Trinity parishioners really enjoyed hosting these kids knowing that we gave them one day full of happiness in their lives and hope they remember Holy Trinity, the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the United States of America when they return to the Ukrainian orphanage at the end of August.”

“This is something they can tuck away and draw on whenever they are maybe in a dark place. They’ll think about it,” added Sheila Yurchak.

As WLOX reporter Ray Price said “Eyes as bright as headlights on a long, dark road, cheeks high as mountain peaks. Teeth showing proudly in a mouth opened as wide as a valley. When you see it, you know

exactly what you’re looking at. It’s the face of a child who has had the best day of his or her life.”



