



**EMPOWERING DETROIT CHILDREN
EXPERIENCING POVERTY
TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL**



NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Friends of FOCUS Detroit,

Glory to Jesus Christ! I trust this, our first inaugural newsletter, finds you well as we approach the season of Great Lent, preparing for Holy Week and Great and Holy Pascha.

Every year, as Easter approaches, one will see marshmallow bunnies, special Easter chocolate bars, and egg coloring kits being sold in the grocery store or pharmacy. During this season it seems as though everything concerning Easter is geared towards children – apart from maybe Mardi Gras and St. Patrick's Day. While secular society sees Easter as a children's holiday, the Orthodox world looks at the coming celebration of Pascha much differently. It is not a childish holiday or an excuse to paint eggs or eat special chocolates, but the most important feast in our Church's calendar, when we celebrate the risen Christ. Those of us who know the true meaning of Pascha put less focus on the bunny or on candy, but instead focus on creating a "fertile soil of holiness in our hearts". Certainly, our children will always love the chocolate bunnies, the bright pastel colors, and the egg decorating, but as we fast through Great Lent and prepare for Pascha, is there another way that we can serve our children and prepare our hearts, making our souls fertile to bear the fruit of the resurrection?

In the Gospel of Matthew: 18 the Evangelist writes, "Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

When you volunteer and support FOCUS you are supporting hungry, humble children who experience great poverty, and many times even homelessness. These children experience poverty on a level few of us can imagine and yet these are the children whom Jesus is holding up as an example for us; they are the example of humility of faith he is seeking from us, especially during Great Lent. This is a mystery. The Lord is clear; He wants us to have faith like little children. "By no other means [will we] enter the Kingdom of Heaven," He says. What is this faith, how do we adopt it? Perhaps, as the Lord explains in Matthew Chapter 25 (please look it up!), we must humble ourselves and care for

the needs of the less fortunate. It takes great humility of heart – faith as a child, as it were – to care for those living in poverty, to sacrifice for those that are counted as the "least" in our society. It is the mission of FOCUS in Detroit to care for children, especially the most vulnerable of children, for they suffer at no fault of their own. If they are to succeed in life they need help. They need our help; they need your help.

As we journey through Great Lent together, I invite you to join me – and others of Metro Detroit's Orthodox Community – to help FOCUS in our mission to serve Detroit's impoverished and needy children, and above all, to respond to the Lord's encouragement to have humble, child-like faith.

May God bless you and your families during the season of Great Lent. Please, too, keep us in your prayers. May God grant you all many years.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Shanburn".

Eric Shanburn
Director



Local Director Eric Shanburn on the set of TV20's "MI Healthy Mind"

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

FOCUS: Detroit believes that every child matters. During the school year, we assist students by providing reading and tutoring programs, as well as securing practical resources for them, such as shoes, clothes, and reading books.

As the school term draws to a close and we look towards the summer, we notice that our students' needs will change. Because students will not be in school during the summer they will no longer have access to the free and reduced meals that they rely on, as well as the weekend food sacks that FOCUS provides. The summer is a very vulnerable time for children who do not have regular access to proper nutrition.

This summer FOCUS, Detroit will be participating in the Summer Food Service Program, a Federal assistance program offered by the United States Department of Agriculture, to provide much needed daily meals for children living below the poverty line. FOCUS will prepare 75-100 lunches daily that will be served at YMCA summer camps, in both Romulus and Melvindale.

We will need 2-4 volunteers to assist with meal preparation every week day morning starting June 20th and ending Sept. 2nd.

If you are interested please contact us at 248-671-4483 or detroit@focusna.org

We are also still looking for a kitchen to prepare and store the food. If your parish has a kitchen and fridge space and is interested in partnering with us throughout the summer, please contact us!



BACKPACK FEEDING PROGRAM

This year one of our most popular programs was our Backpack Feeding Program. Throughout the year, twice a month, many parishes across the Metro Detroit area have participated with the work of FOCUS by hosting Backpack meal assembly sessions. At these sessions, volunteers work together to assemble bags of nonperishable food to provide 1,890 meals every Friday. These meals are later taken to our partner schools and handed out to hungry children to take home so that they have something to eat on the weekend.

Upcoming Assembly Events:

March 17 - St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Sterling Heights

April 7 - Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Downtown Detroit

April 21 - Plymouth Action Club (private)

May 5 - Basilica of St. Mary Antiochian Church in Livonia

May 19 - Sts. Peter and Paul Romanian Orthodox Church in Dearborn Heights

GALA FUNDRAISER

On November 7th we held our annual Gala at St. George Antiochian Church in Troy, MI. The event drew more than a hundred people from all across Metro Detroit and raised \$5400. This was our second major fundraising event since beginning in Detroit and we are delighted that so many Orthodox parishes were represented.

Our keynote speaker was Mrs. Angela Moore, principal of Commonwealth Community Development Academy. After she gave a rousing testimony we had a silent auction, a wonderful Mediterranean meal, and a performance by the Commonwealth Community Development Academy dance troop. They were wonderful!

We send special thanks to all those who attended and donated their time and money, to the parish of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church and Fr. Joseph Antypas, and to Anne Randall (our Advisory Board Chairperson), who emceed the event.

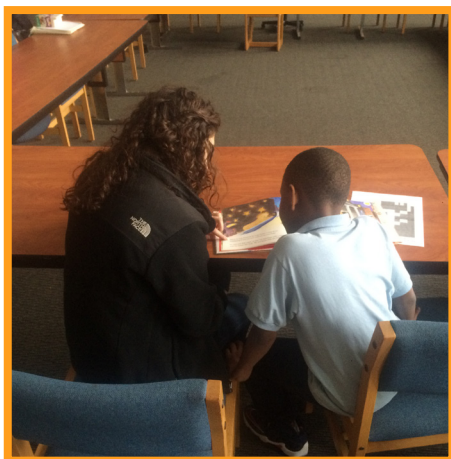
Thank you!



TUTORING PROGRAM & READING BUDDY PROGRAM

FOCUS continues to offer after school tutoring programs at Escuela Avancemos School in southwest Detroit. We were also very fortunate to work with Experiencia Academy in Midtown Detroit this year to offer a Reading Buddy program for struggling readers. Both programs were geared for students between grades K-6.

We want to thank Ellene Zervos, who coordinates our Tutoring and Reading Program, all of our volunteers, especially those from Wayne State Medical School whom we partner with.



Contact us to inquire about

NEEDED DONATIONS

START A DRIVE!

- Mac and Cheese Cups
- 7.5 oz Chef Boyardee/spaghettios pop top cans or cups
- Fruit snack packets
- Cereal bars or granola bars (no peanuts)
- Ramen Noodles or cup of soup
- Carnation Breakfast drink powder packets
- Oatmeal packets
- Bowls or small boxes of cereal
- Small pretzel/Cheez-it/Goldfish snack bags
- Lunchables
- Fruit cups or Apple sauce cups/packs
- Pudding cups
- Double Barrel Beef and cheese sticks
- Small Raisin boxes
- Rice Krispie treat bars
- Cans of Tuna
- *Gently used reading books for K-6th grade kids
- *Gently used kids clothing for K-6th grade kids



Check out our GoFundMe Campaign!

[Gofundme.com/feeddetroitkids](https://gofundme.com/feeddetroitkids)

DONATING TO FOCUS DETROIT

Thank You for your continued support to FOCUS Detroit as we continue to move individuals and families from lives of dependency to self-sufficiency. All funds will go towards helping children in Detroit.

Donate online at www.focusdetroit.org or by mail with the return envelope provided.

Perhaps even more important for you to know is this: 94 cents of every dollar given to FOCUS goes directly to programs and services that impact the lives of the homeless and working poor.

Checks should be made payable to:

FOCUS DETROIT and mailed to:

P.O. Box 645039

Pittsburgh, PA 15264-5039

FOCUS



DETROIT

4750 Woodward Ave
Detroit, MI 48201

"The rich exist for the sake of the poor and the poor exist for the salvation of the rich"—St. John Chrysostom

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

AUGUST 2015 – FEBRUARY 2016

Weekend Meals: **34,020**

Shoes and Clothing: **1,597**

School Supplies & Books: **1,555**

Tutors developed: **39**

Kids Tutored: **74**



FELLOWSHIP of ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS UNITED to SERVE