



SAINT BASIL ACADEMY

AN ORTHODOX HOME SERVING CHILDREN IN NEED
We reach, We heal, and We bring the light of Christ to young lives.



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REPORT TO THE 43rd BIENNIAL CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS JULY 2016

Saint Basil Academy is an institute of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The basic infrastructure of life at Saint Basil is founded upon the Christian teachings of Jesus Christ and His Orthodox Church. Saint Basil is the reality of those beliefs manifested in the mission of caring for children in need.

Saint Basil Academy is the only Greek Orthodox licensed residential child-care institution for Orthodox children in need in America. Saint Basil Academy is the manifestation of the Greek Orthodox Church's caring love for young people in desperate life situations. Saint Basil Academy ministers to the whole child: mind, body and spirit. Our mission is to facilitate shelter, protection, love and education for our young people so they are able to grow up as healthy, wholesome, well-rounded Orthodox Christians, as well as productive members of society with vision and hope. For over seventy years Saint Basil has provided a loving, safe and warm Christian environment for its youth. Its Garrison campus is situated snugly along the banks of the majestic Hudson River just across from the United States Military Academy of West Point.

Saint Basil is a unique place with a unique philosophy regarding residential care. We are committed to offering each child an opportunity for a new beginning and a chance to view him or herself in new ways, with an enhanced self-esteem. Residential Life staff plays a significant role in this setting providing the best educational, social, emotional and recreational experience for our children, while the clinical staff provides the best therapeutic environment. Our children depend on the attitudes, understanding and skills of the Saint Basil staff. Children thrive when they feel they are being supported and encouraged in an atmosphere where guidelines and expectations are consistent and predictable.

HISTORY OF THE ACADEMY

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.

Colonel Jacob Ruppert purchased the estate in January 1919. The Colonel was President of the New York City Brewery, Jacob Ruppert Co. Ruppert's other interest in life was

baseball. In 1914 he acquired the New York Yankees for \$450,000, in 1919 he purchased the site for Yankee Stadium, which opened in 1923.

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, the Philoptochos purchased the 400-acre Jacob Ruppert estate for only \$55,000. In 1976 a parcel of land encompassing primarily marshland was sold to the Audubon Society.

The Archbishop dreamed of establishing an orphanage or children's home ever since he arrived in the United States in 1931. The Ruppert estate was purchased with the proceeds from two years of Vasilopita celebrations.

The Academy was named for Saint Basil, who was the founder of many orphanages, hospitals and homes for the elderly in fourth century Caesarea, Asia Minor. He is considered one of the greatest philanthropists of the Church and founder of the modern day hospital concept.

In the early years the Academy was a home for girls. It was an educational institution incorporated by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. The Academy also established a women's junior college: Saint Basil Academy Teachers' College. The Teachers' training program offered a three-year course of study. The young women were housed in the "Main" building and also assisted in the care of the resident children. In 1973, the Teachers College merged with Hellenic College in Brookline, Massachusetts.

The Academy is home to the late Archbishop Michael's tomb. Archbishop Michael had a special love for the Academy, and under his leadership, the Academy flourished in the 1950s in an era of growth and capital improvements. He expanded the program to include boys.

Once the need to admit boys became apparent, AHEPA initiated a drive and renovated the old horse stables and converted it to the Boy's Dorm. These dormitories were used until 1982 when the new AHEPA Hall for Boys was built and dedicated. The old dormitories are now planned for renovation into the new Retreat and Conference Center for the entire Archdiocese community to benefit.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Education is an essential part of life at the Academy. The staff places tremendous emphasis on the academic success of each child. Whether the youngster's 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.

There is excellent cooperation with both schools which have been superb in seeking what is best for the children.

The younger children, until eighth grade attend Bishop Dunn Memorial School in Newburgh, New York. The high school children grades ninth through twelfth attend various high schools in the area which have programs to address their specific needs. The children participate in school sports, drama clubs, school trips and other extra curricular activities. Transportation to and from school is provided by the staff of the Residential Life Department.

SAINT BASIL ACADEMY LEARNING CENTER

The Nicholas J. Sumas Library became the Learning Center in January of 2001 as a way to address the educational needs of the students at Saint Basil Academy. It was created with the expertise and cooperation of Marist College's School of Education in that the original basis of instruction would not only address homework strategies, but would also remediate underlying educational deficits and provide strategies for students.

Throughout the years of its operation the Learning Center has served many students. The staff of the Learning Center genuinely value and understand the students of the Academy. It is our fortune and long-term vision to have educated, dedicated individuals work with our students not only to provide educational enhancement, but to serve as successful role models for the students.

A sign of the Learning Center's far-reaching effects is witnessed by the number of students who have pursued higher education after graduation from high school. Close to 100% of our students have continued on to college or trade schools. The underlying goal of the Learning Center has been to make our students thinkers, individuals who will eventually become independent young adults who will prove themselves to be valuable and contributing members of society.

RESIDENTIAL LIFE

The Residential Life Department has been operating for over sixty-seven years here at Saint Basil Academy. A typical day consists of helping the children meet their educational, recreational and spiritual needs. The program is made up of a behavior modification program which holds the children accountable for both positive and negative behavior. We also teach and use Therapeutic Crisis Intervention a program that was designed and taught by Cornell University as part of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Each staff member has been certified in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention program.

All students in the Academy live in a dorm. There are seven different dorms here on campus, four for the girls and three for the boys. Some students have their own rooms and some have a roommate. Common areas are rooms that are shared by all the students, like the television room, the kitchen and bathrooms. The Bridge Program has a male and female dorm for the post high school residents.

The children have twenty-four hour residential counselors when not in school. The dorm is their home and they are able to personalize their rooms. 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 with monthly young adult Saturday activities, shopping, movies and many other events.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

The chapel is central to the life of the children. It symbolizes the religious life, and spiritual education and nurturing of the children. This is what makes Saint Basil Academy a totally unique residential child-care institution. The Greek Orthodox faith as given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ is what sustains and enhances the ministry to the children. 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. The Chapel sits up on the hill as a beacon of faith to remind the children and all who visit the Academy of the Greek Orthodox Faith and spiritual life the Academy represents.

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 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.

RECREATION

The Pan-Arcadian Gym at the Academy is central to the year-round recreational needs of the children and is a very versatile building. It is used as a basketball court and houses an exercise/weight room. Each child is taught how to ride a bicycle, if they do not know, and receive one at the first Christmas. The gym is also available as an auditorium for many events at the Academy. The annual Christmas Pageant, Fashion Show, and Vasilopita celebrations are all held in the Gym. The facility is capable of holding 200 people

Swimming is a major part of the life of the children. The Daughters of Penelope Pool was built in 1983 and enclosed in 1985 by William Chirgotis of blessed memory. The pool is heated and available for use by the children and visitors to the Academy throughout the year. All the children learn how to swim. Many of the high school and college age youngsters have obtained their lifeguard certification. Swimming is one of the most important and healthful recreational activities for the children. They love it. There are locker and shower rooms built by the Daughters of Penelope in the early 1990’s. Local community organizations including the American Red Cross use the facility for training classes.

The Athletic Field, created by the Philoptochos Sisterhood of Saint Basil, is located on the Southern part of the campus. The children take advantage of it especially in warmer

weather with various sports. It is also made available to the Haldane School District for their lacrosse and soccer teams. Thus Saint Basil is seen as a viable part of the local community.

Recently the Academy hosted its First Youth Orthodoxy Day and the recreational facilities were used extensively. Youth from local Churches throughout Southern Connecticut, Upper New York and Westchester County participated in many sports and recreational activities.

The student center has the newest game platforms, large screen television and many arcades. There are also many nature trails in the beautiful wooded campus and two charming waterfalls for the children to enjoy.

HEALTH PROGRAMS

EMOTIONAL CARE

Clinicians provide a very special relationship for the Saint Basil children. The Clinical Staff includes clinicians (who have attained at least a Master's degree), a Registered Nurse, graduate students, and a consulting child psychiatrist. 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.

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

Saint Basil Academy is a training facility for graduate students from New York University and Fordham University. Our consulting child psychiatrist visits and confers monthly with the children and the Clinical Staff.

MEDICAL CARE

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

DENTAL CARE

Established in 1999 the Demetrios & Georgia Kaloidis Dental Clinic provides a home for volunteer dentists who assist with the dental care of the children. Volunteer Dentists from around the tri-state area give of their time and provide annual check-ups, teeth cleanings and any other dental services needed by the children of the Academy. The clinic is fully outfitted with all the equipment and all the supplies necessary for a modern dental clinic. This is a great blessing for the children and their physical well-being.

THE 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 that prepares young people in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood. It helps to develop responsibility, as well as 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 and self-esteem needed to successfully work and live independently.

Staff members are assigned as mentors to the young adult residents to assist with personal, career, educational and residential concerns. It has proven to be a model for this type of young adult programming.

SCOUT HOUSE AT SAINT BASIL ACADEMY

The Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting under the auspices of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America is the officially recognized Eastern Orthodox religious committee for the Boy and Girl Scouts of America. Since 2000 they have maintained a cabin on the campus of Saint Basil, which is their own Scout House. During the year, church parish Scout troops come and stay overnight while doing work projects.

There are two major annual events on the campus. The Spring Scout Camporee and the Fall Scout Religious Retreat at which the Holy Cross School of Theology students act as retreat masters. Hundreds of young girl and boy Scouts participate.