27/01/2020

Tampa Bay District Conference Inaugural Blue Jean Ball



On January 11, 2020, Anna and Joseph Kokolakis Chaired the Inaugural Blue Jean Ball in Tarpon Springs, Florida, on behalf of the Tampa Bay District Conference. (TBDC). The TBDC was formed by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios to foster better communication and support among Tampa Bay area Greek Orthodox parishes. The event raised more than $110,000 in donations and pledges for the Diakonia Retreat Center (DRC) in Salem, South Carolina. The DRC is owned and operated by the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta. It is set in the foothills of the Appalachians and features the beautiful Panagia Chapel, wooded glens, hiking trails and a 12-acre private lake.



Over 300 guests from eleven parishes enjoyed delicious BBQ and camp-style fare while camp alumni offered testimonials and demonstrated some of the character building activities from the camp. The goal of the evening was to bring the beauty and His Eminence’s vision of a true Diakonia Retreat Center to Tampa Bay. The

program presented at the event perfectly illustrated the DRC's impact on our youth and challenged the community to pledge its continued support for the spiritual, educational and cultural development of our children.

While a stunning retreat location, it is the daily ministries taking place at the DRC that make a real difference in our world. The St. Stephen's Summer Camp, for example, offers our youth an opportunity to spend time at the DRC living a true Orthodox lifestyle with liturgical services, community living, athletics, arts and social activities. The life-long impact that this program has had on every one of our children is immeasurable. For over five years our church's Philoptochos has offered Christ the Good Shepherd Special Needs Family Camp at the DRC, focusing on children with autism. This faith-based camp includes parent seminars, bonding opportunities with other families and spiritual nourishment. These are only two of the many programs hosted at the DRC on a weekly basis.

"It was truly an honor to work with such an amazing team on the Gala and we are humbled by the trust His Eminence placed in our community. While we are thankful for its financial success, our primary goal was to communicate the mission of our Diakonia Retreat Center and its impact on our youth and families. Through testimonials and demonstrations, we pray that our guests recognized the need for continued support so that our DRC can expand its ministries for our children and grandchildren" said Kokolakis after the event.
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