



Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve

FOCUS + Gateway City (the St. Louis Center of FOCUS North America) is located on the Near South Side of Downtown St. Louis in the basement of St. Michael the Archangel OCA church and provides for the local needs of impoverished families and homeless individuals, addressing the whole person. Leadership is provided by an experienced Director who works with the Leadership Team, Ministry leaders and Parish Liaisons.

In the FOCUS Gateway City Center, FOCUS meets pressing community needs: the need for sustainable solutions out of poverty for those in need in the St. Louis area with increased systematic volunteer management for the rapidly expanding group of FOCUS volunteers to aid in providing those needed services.



In 2016, the rates for unemployment in the city of St. Louis (6.6%) were significantly higher than the national average (5.0%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Within the neighborhood of the FOCUS Gateway City Center, 39.7% of residents had incomes below the poverty line in 2013 (City-Data, 2016). This translates to 777 residents and 579 households, simply neighboring the Center. 28% of people in the city of St. Louis are living in poverty (Census, 2010-2014). In 2016, there were 3,279 homeless in St. Louis (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2015). One in eight Americans face hunger and one in four St. Louis households is food insecure (Feeding America, 2016). These elements are often tied to one another. FOCUS beneficiaries feel as though the basic needs our services

provide aid them in numerous aspects of their lives. By walking with them on their journey, trust is built and continued support is given for the challenges and joys individuals will experience through their lives. FOCUS programs are in tune with the needs of the community and exist to provide sustainable solutions and support for beneficiaries in St. Louis. FOCUS Gateway City ensures basic needs are met while supporting those in need for lasting positive change in their lives.

St. Louis residents have a deep desire and innate affinity to serve. 59.9% of residents engage in “informal volunteering” such as acts of services for friends or neighbors, and 55.1% donate \$25.00 or more to charity (Corporation of National Community Service, 2014). Volunteers in St. Louis best enjoy service experiences regarding distribution of food and clothing, both of which are services FOCUS provides. In 2014, 62.5 million hours of service were recorded by residents of St. Louis. All of these statistics paint a clear picture – there is a great need, and there is a great willingness to serve. FOCUS desires to harness the energy and compassion of the residents and channel it to those we serve. Last year, FOCUS Gateway City provided opportunities for volunteers primarily from the Orthodox churches in the area, but also from other area churches and for people with backgrounds of all types, totaling in 3,055 hours of service.

[FOCUS North America](#) is a national movement, founded by Orthodox Christians united in faith, and joined by others, with a desire to provide action-oriented and sustainable solutions to poverty in communities across America. As an expression of Christ’s love FOCUS North America serves the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned by providing Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding, and Shelter. We bring communities, parishes, and partners together in hands-on activities – uniting giver and the underserved - to help transform all of our lives and break the cycle of poverty that afflicts so many in our society, by moving them from dependency to self-sufficiency.

FOCUS North America is a 501c3 non-for-profit. All of FOCUS’s services are provided without discrimination of any kind. We do not require any faith commitment from anyone we help. We have a deep belief in the sanctity and dignity of each person we serve and we

welcome partnerships with others, faith-based or secular. Ninety-three percent of public donations go directly to helping those in need. We are an accredited charity with the Better Business Bureau.

At FOCUS Gateway City, our Apostles Community Kitchen serves nearly 17,000 meals annually to those in need 2-3 Sunday evenings per month. These meals are sponsored and served by volunteers from area Orthodox churches and other area churches.



Every other Wednesday morning our kitchen opens its doors as a food pantry, offering canned foods, fresh produce, and other food items. Once a quarter, local corporate volunteers serve a full breakfast to those who come to shop at the food pantry. The wardrobe area is also open at this time, providing seasonal clothing items and basic household items to those who need them. We serve approximately 50 households and area homeless on our open Wednesdays currently. Recently, new computers were installed to provide an avenue for our guests to look for jobs, places to live or to check their e-mail on our open Wednesdays.