

OVC| JULY 2025



PROGRESS

Updates on the progress of Orthodox Volunteer Corps



Year 3

"I walk away from OVC more grounded, more faithful, more myself. And I know now that service won't just be something I do—it is who I am." – Justina

**We just finished our third year of programming.
It's a good time to remember...**

What we do

- We facilitate a year of immersive service for young adults.
- We ground and guide all we do in Orthodoxy.
- We serve with the most vulnerable.
- We develop servant leaders for the Church and the world.



How we do it

- **Service:** We match Corps Members with nonprofits for 10-month placements, giving the opportunity to serve and learn over time.
- **Formation:** We meet weekly in full-day seminars focused on community engagement, leadership, and the Orthodox tradition of service.
- **Community:** Corps Members live together, practicing service to and growing in faith with one another.
- **Church:** The year of service is embedded within the family, the mystery, the challenge, and the healing of the Church.

Our vision for the future

- Every Orthodox young adult in the United States thoughtfully considers a year of service
- They model for the world how to put faith in action
- They practice service throughout their lives—in their professions, within the Church, and for the world.

What's New?

- In September, we launched our full-time program in a new city – Boston – doubling our cohort to 14 young adults
- In November, we added a new member to our staff – Demetra Zouzas, Manager of Organizational Growth.
- In April, our COO, Kyra Limberakis, welcomed a new member to her family – Leonidas Basil!

What's Steady?

- For the third year, we ran our full-time program in Pittsburgh.
- For the second year, we ran our part-time program, OVC Reach, in Pittsburgh, with over thirty young adults.



What's the Impact?

- Together this year, our Corps Members directly served over 900 people every week.
- Collectively, they volunteered over 17,000 hours of service.
- We partnered with 12 different nonprofits this year.
 - Corps Members worked at free medical clinics and drop-in homeless shelters.
 - They resettled refugees and provided childcare for kids from low-income neighborhoods.
 - They helped mothers in crisis and families in need of housing.
- Most importantly, service shaped lives. Here's one example:



“You’re like an angel.”

At the beginning and the end, we ask Corps Members to think. How do you want to grow during your year of service? What have you learned looking back at your time?

Cecelia began with coffee. She introduced herself, via a short video, pouring from a fresh pot. She spoke of the fellowship formed over a shared cup. And in opening herself to others she wanted to test her authenticity—was she ready to live her faith in service with her neighbor.

We matched Cecelia with Habitat for Humanity in Boston. There she met Tesfa. Originally from Ethiopia, he was now living in a studio apartment with his wife and two kids. The neighborhood was not safe for his kids to play outside. “If you saw where I lived,” he explained, “you would cry.” Having learned about Habitat, he contacted Cecelia and asked about housing. She explained that there was a lengthy application process. “Please help me,” he asked. She did.

Over the next months, Cecelia worked with Tesfa through the process. It began with a screening for eligibility. It moved through a written application and an interview. It required collecting and presenting personal information. It required waiting, collecting more data, and waiting again. Cecelia was reminded of an insight from another Corps Member: “Walking with others sometimes means walking in circles.”

These months were hard. Tesfa really wanted a house, and Cecelia was doing all she could. But she would interview over 50 families for only four houses. The final decision would be made by lottery. In her conversations with Tesfa, Cecelia tried to share hope and candor. And she told him she was praying for him.

On her final day of placement, Tesfa came to the office, this time with a gift, not a request. He gave Cecelia a 23-piece traditional Ethiopian coffee set. There wasn't time to show her the cultural rituals associated with it, but he did point out the repeating print: Angels. "You're like an angel to me," he explained. That was a kind word; what made it profound is this: Tesfa doesn't know if he's going to get a house. All he has is his name in the lottery, and the odds are against him. But it's precisely when the odds are long that good work must continue. It's especially when the odds are long that persistence, presence, and prayer can bridge heaven and earth, as angels do.

During our final retreat, during her final presentation of learning, Cecelia told us about Tesfa and showed us the coffee set. She then invited anyone who wanted to rise early with her on the last day of OVC to use the set for the first time. A half dozen of us joined her. So Cecelia ended as she began the year—with coffee. She ended having been tested, with some wounds and regrets, with more soberness at the challenge ahead, but also with a new and seasoned hope and with a new friend, Tesfa, who by his generous spirit, has much to teach us all.



THANK YOU!

With love in Christ,
Michael Sider-Rose & Kyra Limberakis

