

## Thessaloniki's Anatolia College, Rich in History And Focused on Future

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

THESSALONIKI – Anatolia College is an “integrated academic community” that includes an Elementary School, Anatolia High School, and the American College of Thessaloniki (ACT). The 125 year-old institution has deep roots in modern Greece, and its president, Panos Vlachos, spoke to TNH about its future and the current state of higher education in his country.

In 1886 the Anatolia College of Mersovan was founded in the Pontus region of Asia Minor as a theological seminary by American missionaries and was attended by Greek and Armenian Christians. After the exchange of population caused by the Asia Minor disaster, it reopened in Thessaloniki in 1924 with help from Eleftherios Venizelos. Currently, 350 students on

semester abroad programs are enrolled at ACT from more than 10 countries.

Vlachos began with an overview of the devastating impact of the Greek economic crisis on higher education.

While public universities are facing severe cuts in their budgets, “the ministry of education does not allow them to reduce the number of students they accept, and that created problems because they were forced to dismiss many faculty,” he noted.

Private colleges, long championed by the EU and the United States, can now be part of the solution.

Until 2008, the Greek constitution only permitted public universities to operate. New laws in 2008 and 2012 provide some recognition to the degrees granted by private colleges, which Vlachos said constituted progress.

He cannot forecast when full recognition of private universities will be given, but he expects over the next 4-5 year to see more American colleges will be operating in Greece – there are currently three: American College of Greece (Deree), the American Farm School in Thessaloniki, and Anatolia College.

There are also a number of colleges with European affiliation.

ACT, which was just re-credited for another 10 years by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), has gradually grown to have the largest foreign students program in Greece.

The majority are not of Greek descent, but “they see Greece as a destination that is of interest to them,” Vlachos said, and added, “We follow very closely the liberal arts philosophy of American colleges – they will re-

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AP PHOTO/KOSTAS TSIRONIS

### Golden Dawn Members Support Their Party Leaders

A supporter of the extreme right party Golden Dawn shouts slogans during a protest in front of the Parliament, in Athens on Nov. 30. About 2000 people gathered at the Greek parliament to protest the imprisonment of the party's leader and two other lawmakers. Two smaller, rival gatherings of leftist activists in Athens, meanwhile, dispersed peacefully.

## Mom: Priest “Ruined” Son’s Wedding

By Theodore Kalmoukos  
TNH Staff Writer

BOSTON, MA – Christine Stavropoulos, a graduate of Hellenic College, sent a strong complaint to the Archdiocese of America in New York and the Metropolis of Boston alleging that Rev. Anthony Evangelatos of the Annunciation parish of Brockton, MA ruined her son's wedding with his unholy and unbecoming behavior.

In a letter dated October 11, to Metropolitan Methodios of Boston with copy to Archbishop

Demetrios, Stavropoulos began by writing that “I am sending you a hard copy of this letter (previously sent to Father Ted [Barbas] as an email), as I have not received a response from prior attempts to contact your office regarding this matter. My family and I are disturbed that our emails and calls have gone unanswered, and so we have decided to try and contact you by writing. We believe we deserve a response and a resolution to this matter.

“Originally, this letter was written the day after my son's

wedding, which took place on September 15 at the Annunciation Church on Oak Street in Brockton, MA. Father Antonios Evangelatos performed the ceremony. My husband, my children and I have been parishioners at Greek Orthodox churches in Massachusetts all of our lives, and we have never witnessed such a rushed, cold, and impersonal wedding. I do not say this lightly, but I truly believe that my son's wedding was ruined, and we are seriously considering re-

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## AGAPW's Fond Farewell to Consul General Sophianou

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – Koula Sophianou, the Consul General of the Republic of Cyprus in New York, was the featured speaker of the inaugural Conversation with Women Leaders Series of the Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) on December 4.

The event which filled the Olympic Tower's Atrium Café with well-wishers, was a beautiful occasion for bidding farewell to the devoted public servant who not only represented her island nation with intelligence, warmth, and grace but who never missed an opportunity to promote the cause of justice for Cyprus, to thank the community for its support through the years, and to express her pride in its achievements, most of all, the advancement of Hellenism in America and the preservation of the Greek language.

Sophianou did not know that the Association would bestow upon her an award - but she might have guessed from its acronym - which perfectly expressed the feelings of everyone in the room: a crystal form that simultaneously evokes a living flame and a teardrop.

Dr. Olga Alexakos, the founder and president of AGAPW, welcomed and thanked the evening's guests, dignitaries and benefactors, which included the Onassis Foundation (USA) Center which donated the space, represented by Penny Tsillas, the wife of its Executive Director, Ambassador Lucas Tsillas.

Dr. Aphrodite Navab, AGAPW's Vice-President was the Emcee and moderator of the Q & A that followed.

Sophianou turned the invitation to speak on the topic of public service into an opportunity to honor the people in her life who conveyed to her the essence of public service.

Although there were no government officials in her family, through their lives they taught her the meaning of duty.

First and foremost, there is her mother. Sophianou was 1 ½ years old when the Turks in-

vaded and occupied northern Cyprus, including her hometown of Famagusta-Varosha. “Like other people, we lost everything – property, our home, our father.”

Now refugees, her mother found a job and made sure she gave Sophianou and her sister the best possible life – it was simply her duty.

Her maternal grandparents were also her teachers in the art of sacrifice, hard work and dedication – the characteristics of life in the diplomatic service that is masked by its glamorous exterior.

Sophianou said she was drawn to the Foreign Ministry by her desire to solve the Cyprus problem – an admission that resonated with the idealistic youth of many talented people in the

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## Samaras is Hopeful, but Tsipras Says SYRIZA Rise Is Imminent

### Leftist Leader Proclaims His Party Will Win 2014 Elections

By Andy Dabilis  
TNH Staff Writer

ATHENS – As Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras said the key to Greece's recovery is growth and restoring competitiveness, major opposition SYRIZA Party leader Alexis Tsipras said the government will fall next year and that his Leftists will rule.

Samaras' New Democracy Conservatives find themselves locked in a deepening battle with SYRIZA, which opposes the terms of two bailouts of \$325 billion that is keeping the economy propped up and as the government is locked in tough negotiations with international lenders to keep the money coming.

Speaking to the same audience at a meeting sponsored by the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, Samaras said he wants to wean Greece off the rescue packages and back on track to return to the markets.

“Competitiveness means a decrease in taxation. Exports means to realize the potential that we have as a country,” Samaras said, upbeat that Greece will come back.

“The worst is over and the next year will be a year of recovery for the Greek economy. For the first time this year we covered our needs and we will be left with a small amount, we will not borrow – this is the primary surplus. We have so far fended off bankruptcy, having been very close to it. However, we disproved those who expected bankruptcy. Now we are all talking of competitiveness, productivity and extroversion.”

He has been going from New York to Beijing in search of businesses and trying to persuade them to take a chance on Greece as it tries to get out from under a crushing economic crisis that has a deep recession set to enter a seventh year in 2014.

Greece is surviving on loans from Troika of the European Union-International Monetary Fund-European Central Bank (EU-IMF-ECB) but is battling with the lenders over whether there is a hole in the 2014 budget that could require filling with more austerity measures that Samaras vowed to never ever again impose on beleaguered Greeks buried by big pay cuts, tax hikes and slashed pensions.

With Tsipras saying he wants the Troika's money but not their terms and as the SYRIZA leader has offered no economic recovery plan, Samaras said his rival

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TNH/COSTAS BEI

### Astoria Panel on Obamacare Issues

The Greek American Homeowners Association hosted a timely discussion on Nov. 4 at its headquarters titled “Affordable Care Act/Obamacare.” On the panel (L-R): Minna Elias, Fay Kozas, Karen Schwab, Exec. Director, Mt. Sinai Hospital of Queens, and George Alexiou.

## Story of Costa Concordia Survivors

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – S.O.S. Spirit of Survival – One Family's Chilling Account of the Costa Concordia Disaster is the title of the book written by the Ananias Family about their near-death experience almost two years ago.

Look at the book jacket. Carnival Cruise Line's Costa Concordia is a pretty ship, isn't it? Tall, stately, sleek. Modern.

Look again. The angle of the sea. The Mediterranean's eternal blue is not the serene body of water beloved of tourists. On

January 13, 2012 the sea became a sword that suddenly slashed in two the world of 3,229 passengers and 1,023 crew members: Here was life, here was death – and no one was sore of his fate.

For 32 passengers life came to an end, but for the more than 4000 survivors life would never be the same. The book tells the story of four of those passengers who returned to familiar homes but not to their old lives.

Dean and Georgia Ananias were lifelong devotees of cruising – they have been on more than 60 cruises – and their daughters, Debbie, Cindy, and Valerie also grew to love the pastime.

“It was always our safe haven, our happy place, where we enjoyed life the most,” Georgia told TNH, but now “we can never set foot on another ship until we know that the safety of passengers is put first.”

Their main reason for writing the book was to prod “cruise lines...we want this book to be a catalyst for change,” Georgia said.

The book is the start, and they will continue meeting with officials to promote policy changes worldwide. They already met with the coast guard, who interviewed them for 4½ hours.

“We were given the gift of life and we cannot sit back and do nothing,” Dean told TNH, and Georgia added, “You can't have that kind of a trauma happen without having a different 'normal.'”

They never imagined that would be the case when they boarded the Costa Concordia, the state-of-the-art craft that was launched on September 2, 2005.

Four of them were enjoying

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AP PHOTO/NIKOLAS GIAKOUIMIDIS

### It is Called a Crisis, But it is a Tragedy

Candles are lit in the entrance of the building where a 13-year-old girl died after inhaling fumes from a wood-burning stove, in the northern city of Thessaloniki on Monday. See related story on page 9.







(L-R) Ismini Michaels, George Kitsios, Elpida Hatzivasiliou, Sam Matthews, Stanley Matthews, and Peter Nanos. The child is Bob Manoliades, who was provided assistance by the GCF.



PHOTOS: TNH/COSTAS BEJ  
Nikos Gavalas, President of the Amorgos Society, and George Kitsios, President of the GCF, address the guests about the organization's ambitious plans to build housing for the children.

# Greek Children’s Fund Gala a Success, Dreams of Facility for Children

By Demetris Tsakas  
TNH Staff Writer

TENAFLY, NJ – For three decades the Greek Children’s Fund (GCF) has provided help and financial support to children and their families from Greece, Cyprus, and the United States seeking medical treatment in America. At its 30th anniversary Gala on November 30 the organization announced steps that will take their philanthropic endeavors to the next level.

The GCF announced plans for the establishment of its own housing for the children and their families. \$15,000 has been raised so far, most of which has been donated by the Amorgos Society in New York, and a separate individual contribution by the Society’s president, Nikos Gavalas. At the Gala, which was held in the community center of the Church of St. John the Theologian in Tenafly, NJ Gavalas and the Society’s secretary, Nikitas Theologitis, presented GCF with

a check for \$5000 in behalf of the organization, and a personal check from Gavalas in the amount of \$5000. The President of the Fund, George Kitsios, who was the keynote speaker, expressed gratitude for the donations, noting that they were a catalyst for the fundraising effort to date. The Gala was held in the same room where 30 years ago the GCF held its first event, and it served as the occasion for honoring GCF past president Sam

Matthews and Elpida Hatzivasiliou, who was one of the first children to benefit from the generosity of the Fund. Kitsios welcomed and thanked the guests. He offered tribute to the work of GCF founder Stanley Matthews through the decades, and he also praised new members and officers who are determined to build on the solid foundations laid down by Matthews. Sam Matthews noted that to date GCF has distributed \$7 mil-

lion to help with the treatment of seven thousand children and he accepted the award on behalf of all who work for this purpose. Kitsios told TNH "tonight's event was more successful than expected," and Gavalas said "all of us who are here tonight came to support the common, holy purpose," and Stanley Matthews declared "God is with us, and what we do is God's work, a work of love and prayer." Dino Rallis congratulated the honorees and Kitsios, whom he

lauded for sacrificing his time and for his leadership , and praised the dream of acquiring their own facility. Elpida Hatzivasiliou was hospitalized during Christmas 1986. She shared her experience with the guests and, "I'm back here after so many years to say a big thank you for helping me during my difficult time, and for three decades helping children, supporting them, and providing them the opportunity to dream and hope."

# AGAPW’s Fond Adieu to Departing Cyprus Consul General Koula Sophianou

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room. “At 24 you think you can change the world,” she said.



Over time she learned that the qualities she was born with and which she developed nevertheless enabled her to make an impact. Among her most important lessons was the importance and power of teamwork, which she illustrated through the cooperation she experienced between her Greek and Cypriot colleagues that led her country's EU membership and its defense in the face of vicious attacks when its citizens voted against the deeply flawed Annan Plan in 2004. Sadly, not everyone cares for the injustice and pain on Cyprus. Sophianou's poignant yet forceful presentations caused people – Greeks and non-Greeks – to care. And to want to fight for justice and freedom on Cyprus.

Koula Sophianou, Cyprus' Consul General was AGAPW's featured speaker, but she was surprised with a touching award.

During the Q & A she urged the women and men in the room to communicate with public officials, the media and their friends, emphasizing both the need for and the ease with which people can gain knowledge in the internet age. One of the more touching moments came when she noted that she arrived in New York on November 30, 2009 – the day of the feast day of St. Andrew, the patron saint of Cyprus. Sophianou said she felt he was always at her side. During her tenure her appreciation deepened for the efforts

of the community for Cyprus, which she knew from childhood both from news reports of protest marches at the UN and in Washington, and on a more personal basis from the assistance she and her sister received from the Poll family in New York which furthered their education. Duty figured in both cases. She learned that people like to Polls offered material, and vital moral support, from a sense of duty, and she learned up close as Consul General that members of the community “fight for Cyprus because you think it's the right thing to do.”

Sophianou urged them to continue and declared “Each one of you is a leader...be informed, reach out, establish relationships...Support Greek and Cypriot artists and musicians and produce cultural events... Lets support each other, and modern Greek studies programs, and give more scholarships to students.” The audience was aglow. One guest during Q & A said “They lit the Rockefeller tree tonight, and you lit up New York too.” That’s how people have felt since November 30, 2009.

# Mother Says Priest Ruined Son’s Wedding

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peating the ceremony at a church in Greece.” Stavropoulos acknowledged that “my son and his wife were late (30-40 minutes) to the ceremony. I have never in my life been to a wedding that started on time, and I have never seen a priest react in such a way to a bride's tardiness. First, he humiliated the bride's father in front of the whole congregation. The father approached the priest to apologize for his delay which was due to traffic, and Father Antonios sarcastically berated him in front of everyone, from the altar, saying: 'I suppose traffic was only a problem for you and not for everyone else who is already here.' How embarrassing! Father Antonios proceeded to lecture the congregation about traffic and being on time as we waited for the bride.” Evangelatos was in a hurry to finish the wedding because he had to attend his own family obligation. Stavropoulos wrote that “a Greek Orthodox wedding usually takes about 45 minutes. Father Antonios rushed through the ceremony so quickly, that we ended in 25 minutes. He cut prayers, interrupted the chanter, and even went so far as to physically pull my son around the table during the Dance of Isaiah, to the point where his crown repeatedly fell from his head. This made the best man very nervous, and the bride nearly tripped over her dress. Father Antonios' curt demeanor and indescribable coldness towards the newlyweds made for a very awkward ceremony. My son even complained to me afterwards: 'Mom, the priest didn't look us in the eye even once the whole time.' What mother's heart wouldn't break upon hearing that? “After the ceremony was over, the priest did not bless the couple, did not wish them happiness and prosperity, and just didn't say a single thing to them or to the congregation as closing remarks. As my son and his wife turned to leave the altar, there was some

clapping in the church, and Father Antonios descended the steps and proceeded to yell at us. I understand that clapping is not generally acceptable in a church (and I don't believe it's appropriate myself), but that is no way to address it. To end a wedding on that note is despicable. Instead of some warm remarks from their priest, my son and his wife basically got shoved out with no parting words of wisdom or God's blessing, but with words of hate.” Stavropoulos wrote to Methodios that “when the couple and the parents formed a receiving line after the ceremony, Father Antonios interrupted it in the middle to get the couple to sign their certificates, because he was in a hurry to leave. Apparently he had planned some kind of family event after the church ceremony, and we were getting in the way of his plans. He did not even come to the reception after the church to do the blessing, even though he was invited. Again, this has never happened to me, and it left a bitter taste in my mouth that my son was treated this way.” When Stavropoulos approached Evangelatos after the ceremony to ask him about all of that, he was sarcastic to her. She wrote that “I, of course, after the ceremony to ask him why all of this happened, and I confronted him with what I think are very valid complaints. I cannot begin to describe his rudeness and the sarcasm that was dripping from every word that came from his mouth. Meanwhile, he kept walking and telling me he was busy and had to leave, and if I didn't like it I should have gone to my own parish. I understand that we were late, and this can be frustrating. But a priest is supposed to be a patient character, a role model, and someone to whom a young couple looks for advice when starting their new lives. Father Antonios, through his unacceptable behavior, shattered this perception.” She wrote that “Father Antonios accepted double payment

for his 'services'...the best man after the ceremony approached the priest and paid him an additional \$100 for the ceremony, plus \$50 each for the chanter and the sexton. The priest took the money saying: 'They already paid me, but I'll take that.'” Initially, Stavropoulos had sent a letter to Fr. Theodore Barbas, Chancellor of the Boston Metropolis, who ignored her completely. A month later she sent the letter to Methodios with a copy to Demetrios. Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, Chancellor of the Archdiocese in a letter October 22 wrote that “since this involves a clergyman in the Metropolis of Boston, Church protocol dictates that this matter be investigated and handled by the local Metropolis, which will respond accordingly and take appropriate action if warranted. In any case, I am sorry that your experience on what should have been a joyful event has caused you so much concern.” Metropolitan Methodios told TNH that “I took all the necessary action. We are trying to communicate with the family and I am willing to personally go to their home to talk to them.” Evangelatos declined TNH's request for comment. After Methodios' directive, Evangelatos attempted to communicate by phone with the newlyweds and Stavropoulos but they were so disappointed that they had nothing to tell him. Evangelatos sent a letter to Stavropoulos on November 12 stating among other things that “I extend my apologies to you and your family if the wedding was not as you had expected.” He also returned the extra money that the best man had given him. TNH was told from sources within the Brockton parish that this was not the first time that Evangelatos had behaved in unbecoming way. The membership of the parish, sources said, has declined to low numbers while a few years ago a massive exodus of six members of the parish council took place because of Evangelatos.

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