

Hellenic American Leaders – Taking Stock and Looking Forward to New Year

TNH Staff

NEW YORK – The turn of the New Year is a good time to pause, review recent accomplishments and stumbles, and then focus on the challenges and opportunities before us and the plans and corrections that will help us navigate them. The process is helped by looking at who we are, both individually and collectively.

For the Greek-American community in 2014 the agenda is clear: continue to move forward in America without losing touch with our roots in Greece and Cyprus. As the homelands struggle to emerge from their crises, the diaspora is ramping up its efforts to help with humanitarian with contributions to the effort to build a new Greece and Cyprus.

Archbishop Demetrios captured the general tone by combining concern and optimism in his message. “Our feelings and thoughts are many because there are challenges for the New Year and many perspectives on them. Our community continues to have a tremendous mission here to strongly project our Orthodox faith and our Hellenic heritage,” and he feels that mission must intensify “because the challenges are intensifying.”

“The community also has a connection and obligation to our brothers and sisters in Greece and Cyprus.” He said the Archdiocese recently sent assistance

to children in Cyprus for and the aid it has sent to Greece in recent years will continue.

He is also pleased with the efforts of groups like The Hellenic Initiative “which is working to create the conditions that will attract investment to Greece and is helping small companies with guidance and financial support.”

Dr. Nicholas Mezitis is one of the leaders of the Diaspora’s response through his two roles, as president of the Hellenic Medical Society of New York (HMS), and as one of the founders of the Hellenic Relief Foundation (HRF).

They are pursuing opportunities to help their colleagues in Greece through their recent fraternization agreement with the Athens Medical Association. The HMS is supporting people who want to come to the United States for training and research and it has expanded its long-standing scholarship program in the United States to assist young Greeks as well.

The HMS is also helping with general aid, for example, through the One Laptop Per Child project of Greek-American Nicholas Negroponte, founder of the MIT Media Laboratory, they sent 100 computers to the Kalamata region.

The HRF is concerned with nutritional support and they now distribute food aid in several cities in Greece.

Philip Christopher, the President of PSEKA and the Pan-Cyprian Association of America



The Hellenic Relief Foundation is one of the welcome Diaspora initiatives in support of Greece and Cyprus in recent years. Above, HRF distributes school supplies to children.

accentuated the positive while remaining vigilant: “The major achievement in 2013 was the building of the strong relationship with all the Jewish organizations. The PSEKA Conference in Washington, DC was a joint effort with the American Jewish Committee...The new alliance between Greece, Cyprus and Israel plus the discovery of hydrocarbon gas has changed the dynamics.”

He added that more than ever “It’s in the best interest of America to push Turkey to withdraw its troops from Cyprus, reunite the Island and extend Religious freedom.”

Some of most dynamic organizations in the community are focused on women’s issues, but their contribution to the community and their needs.

Olga Alexakos, the founder president of the Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) emphasized their scholarship program, which they plan to expand, and 2013 events that illuminated important topics such as human trafficking and domestic violence.

She told TNH “We believe that strong organizations make strong individuals and communities,” and she added that “A strong diaspora can better support our motherland that is suffering so much and needs all we can give. We would like to ex-

tend our wishes for a peaceful, happy, and prosperous new year.”

Aphrodite Skeadas, President of the National Philoptochos, told TNH “As we approach the start of a new year we are mindful of our many blessings and pray that 2014 will be filled with hope and promise for all God’s children.” The society’s feats in 2013 include the purchase of a permanent home in Manhattan and record-breaking fundraising for implementation of its philanthropic mission.

She emphasized that they “have supported and stand ready to continue to serve our brothers and sisters in Greece and Cyprus who struggle to survive... Philoptochos women throughout the country offer their prayers and also offer comfort, care and assistance.”

National Philoptochos Society recently distributed \$40,000 to children’s ministries in Greece and Cyprus and during the Christmas season they will distribute \$150,000 as humanitarian relief in Greece and Cyprus.

Basil Mossaides, the Executive Director of the Order of AHEPA, said the Order is always looking forward and is excited about 2014, but he also focused on Greece and Cyprus

“In 2013 we sent four medical containers to Greece with a value of close to \$3.7 million and an

additional \$350,000 in food to feed the hungry. Through the APOSTOLI/Mission program of the Church of Greece, AHEPA has fed over 10,000 underprivileged people in 2013. We are always trying to assist our friends and families back in Greece.”

Their domestic endeavors include the annual distribution of \$1million in scholarships “and in 2014 we will actively seek young people to attend the AHEPA Journey to Greece for a semester in Greece.”

He told TNH that “the challenges the Greek American community face are serious, but together we can work to assure that our children and grandchildren will have the same opportunities our forefathers had.”

Tasso Pardalis, the president of the Young Professionals of the Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce, represents a recent burst of activity among the community’s youth and a number of broader initiatives. “It was a very productive year for the Greek community here evidenced in part by the formation of many new advocacy groups, not-for-profits, and business-centered organizations,” he said.

Pardalis told TNH, “Our community is not only showing signs of robust growth in size and influence, but it is also penetrating into new and non-traditional areas of advocacy, from political growth to new industries such as tech and fashion.”

In 2014 he hopes to see “a stronger, more cooperative, and unified existence with greater cooperation between the newly active members and the forward thinking older members of the community...These people are the key to our growth.”

In 2013 the community bade farewell, among others, to two universally acknowledged giants, Andrew A. Athens and Nicholas J. Bouras. Their examples and inspiration live on, as was noted by Dr. Anthony Limberakis and Andrew Manatos, respectively.

Dr. Limberakis, National Commander of the Order of Saint Andrew, told TNH “the very example of Nicholas J. Bouras that inspires us to keep on pressing for justice for the human and religious rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We also note with alarm the signs of narrow thinking coming out of Turkey, especially around Hagia

Sophia. Additionally, we express our deepest concerns over the continuing crisis in Cyprus, and the deepening wide exodus of Christians from the Middle East. We will continue to speak truth to power on all these concerns, resting on no laurels until the work is done.”

Andy Manatos said “I look forward to the promise of 2014 being significantly better than 2013. In this last year we lost two of this era’s greatest Hellenes and Orthodox Christians – Andrew A. Athens and Nicholas Bouras. Enough good things cannot be said about either extraordinary man.”

He is concerned that “Cyprus joined Greece in what can only be described as their Great Depressions,” and there is new concern about religious freedom in Turkey and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

On a more positive note, “Greece did make great strides correcting its structural economic problems, Cyprus began its re-cooperation, the bonding between both countries and Israel grew even closer.”

Manatos also noted that Washington now has a “more realistic view of Turkey. Hopefully, this development will help the government of Cyprus in 2014 as serious efforts to end Turkey’s occupation play out.”

He predicts that 2014 will be a very high profile year the relationship between Greece and America, “the results of which can only accrue to the benefit of both countries. I predict that in 2014 we in America will be afforded the opportunity to infuse over \$100 million into the pockets of young unemployed Greeks and Cypriots.”

TNH also received greetings from its elected officials apropos of the Christmas holiday, whose core message is love and hope for the future. New York State Senator Michael Gianaris wrote “I wish all those celebrating a Merry Christmas and a joyous and healthy New Year. May we all enjoy this time with our families and friends and have the best of luck in the upcoming year.”

State Assemblywoman Aravella Simotas send a message to the community and constituents: “Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a New Year filled with peace and happiness.”



Like Greece, the Republic of Cyprus has undertaken long-delayed structural reforms and has been receiving aid from the Diaspora, including the Archdiocese of America, but the above indicates that the island-nation’s hydrocarbon finds have replaced the euro as its savior.

“Agape and Elpida” for Those Who Need it

By Theodore Kalmoukos

Translated from the original Greek

BOSTON, MA – An effort started some six years ago by Dr. Maria Koulmanda, a prominent physician, researcher, and professor at Harvard Medical School in the fields of children’s diabetes and transplantation, has developed into an officially-recognized nonprofit organization. “Agape and Elpida,” which stands for “Love and Hope” 501 (c) (3) is the new philanthropic organization in Boston which gives “love and hope” to the heroes of this country, the U.S. Homeless Veterans of the Boston area. Its founding members besides Dr. Koulmanda are Themis Karpouzis and Angeliki Kalmoukos.

Koulmanda and some friends had started visiting Centers for Homeless Veterans in Boston monthly, and provided them with a high-quality meal, which they also served. When the small Centers for Homeless Veterans closed, Koulmanda and her friends continue their good gesture by visiting every third Monday of each month the New England Center for Homeless Veterans at 17 Court Street in Boston.

Three years ago, the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Boston where Koulmanda is a member adopted her effort and named it among its ministries. A separate account was opened and various philanthropists members and nonmembers of the Cathedral contributed, so that the program would not be a burden on the general coffers of the church. The program was

self-sustaining. It cost approximately \$350 each time.

Dr. Koulmanda chose the food personally; her friends-volunteers were prominent Harvard professor and physician Dr. Teri Stron, Themis Karpouzis, Angeliki Kalmoukos, Priscila Moscos, and, rarely some members of the Cathedral.

Koulmanda, Karpouzis, and Kalmoukos decided to form “Agape and Elpida” independently of the Cathedral and without any connection to it whatsoever, which will serve

The goal is to provide these heroes who served America in combat and in the front lines with the best possible food and dessert. Never mind whether it will cost \$400 instead of \$350.

quality meal every second Monday of each month at the New England Veteran Center for Homeless. Koulmanda notified Cathedral officials in writing about this initiative and requested that her name be removed church bulletin announcements and from the Ministries Booklet.

Koulmanda told TNH that “I always wanted to establish a nonprofit philanthropic organization to help those fellow human beings who are in need. My dream has now become a reality with my dear friends Themis Karpouzis and Angeliki

Kalmoukos. For years now, constantly and uninterruptedly, with complete dedication as one family, we quietly served every month at the Veteran’s Homeless Center and we will continue to do so from now on as an independent Organization of “Love and Hope” every second Monday of each month at 4:30PM.”

Koulmanda also said that “our organization is officially recognized by the IRS and any donation is tax deductible.” She emphasized that “whoever wishes and at any time may examine the account and our books, because for us even one dollar donated for philanthropic purposes is a sacred donation and the person who makes the donation should know exactly how it is spent.”

Koulmanda said that “we started the organization with funds that we contributed among ourselves as the founding group in order to cover the meals the first few months, and whoever wishes to contribute as much he or she wishes is welcomed and also to come and serve with us.” She added that “our desire is to provide these heroes who served America in combat and in the front lines with the best possible food and dessert without worrying whether the cost is 400 instead of 350 dollars. In the future we are going to assume other philanthropic endeavors here and in Greece. The key was to start.”

Contributions may be sent to: Agape and Elpida, Inc./111 Chestnut Street/Brookline, MA 02445.

St. Nicholas Parish in Enfield CT Closes

TNH Staff

Enfield CT – St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Enfield Connecticut is closing its doors by December 31, after many decades of ecclesiastical presence and witness of Orthodoxy and Hellenism in the area. The main reason for this unfortunate development is its shrinkage.

This historic community, which belongs to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Metropolis of Boston, was comprised of more than 200 families 30 years ago and was alive and active. Today, about 25 to 30 fam-

ilies are left, and a result its general assembly decided on closing it.

The Church building and the priest’s residence will be up for sale. Retired Fr. Peter Chrysafidis is the priest of the parish, which now will merge with the neighboring parish of St. Luke in east Longmeadow, MA.

Metropolitan Methodios told TNH that the merging “was done with the encouragement of the Metropolis of Boston because it sees that, unfortunately, there is no future for this parish.”

Methodios feels that the

parish was beyond salvage. He said “it was a matter of time.” He also said that the “proceeds from the sale of the church building and the priest’s residence will be going to the St. Luke’s parish.”

When we asked Methodios if he is preparing to do something similar in other instances, but “we may suggest but we don’t have the right by the charter to impose such a thing,” he responded. He also said “I personally believe that it should be done in other areas where there are many churches in short distance of one another.”

New Year’s Eve

at Thalassa

Join us to ring in the New Year!

A Sumptuous Prix Fixe menu

Live music with Spiros Exaras and his band
for an authentic festive Greek celebration

Noise makers & other fun party favors

Complimentary Champagne Toast at Midnight

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(does not include beverages, tax, gratuity)
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