

# Happy New Year Greek Style: NY Professional Groups Gather for Vasilopita

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2015 | [BY CONSTANTINE S. SIRIGOS](#)



NEW YORK – The “Traditional Cutting of the Vasilopita” presented by its leading professional organizations launched the New York Greek-American Community’s 2015 social calendar on January 8.

Costas Kellas, the president of the Hellenic American Banker’s Association (HABA) welcomed the guests – members of the host organizations and their friends – who filled the ballroom of Holy Trinity Cathedral for the 5th annual joint event.

Fr. John Vlahos, the Dean of the Cathedral, led the chanting of the hymn of St. Basil the Great, after whom the New Year’s cake is named. He initiated the cutting and invited leaders from each of the host groups to cut one vasilopita for distribution to its members.

After briefly explaining the tradition of the vasilopita, Kellas invited representatives of the organizations to offer greetings.

Dr. George Liakeas, President of the Hellenic Medical Society of New York, declared “We are here for you,” and said HMS hopes to become even more involved in the community and to increase its collaboration with other organizations.

Lou Katsos, the chairman of the Development, Design & Construction and Education and Culture committees of the Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce announced events planned through the Spring, including a celebration the Greek Independence Day in March and a conference on genealogical research on April 25.

Michael Hartofilis, president of the Hellenic Lawyers Association, wished everyone a happy New Year and said, "It is wonderful to participate in this type of function. This room is filled with people from all professions, but we are all Hellenes and it is a wonderful way to start the New Year."

Hartofilis acknowledged the presence of the HLA's founder, Judge Nicholas Tsoucalas. Judge Harriet George was also present.

Nikos Nikolaou, the Vice President of the Cyprus-U.S. Chamber of Commerce wished everyone a "happy, healthy and prosperous new year" and also expressed the hope that there would be more joint events.

Kellas thanked everyone who contributed to the success of the event and acknowledged Zenon Taverna and Sam Catechis, president of Stellar Imports for providing the food and wine.

Dr. Stella Lymberis, vice president of Hellenic Medical Society (HMS) was very pleased, telling TNH "As doctors we give credit where credit is due. It was one of the best –organized events because Costas Kellas and HABA organized it. Everything was on time, the speeches were short and everyone had a good time." She noted that all the groups helped but "HABA synergized everybody."

Olga Alexakos, the president and founder of Association of Greek American Professional Women was a guest. She told TNH she wishes everyone in the community a happy New Year and hopes for "a great year for our motherland. Our hearts and minds are with them as we celebrate."

Alexakos added that "I think it's wonderful to have all these organizations come together. The energy was amazing and there is a lot of talent in this room."

She pointed out that during conversations with the heads of two organizations they came up with ideas for two events – proving the formula works – and she hopes AGAPW will be one of the hosts next year.

Amb. George Iliopoulos, Consul General of Greece, called it a unique event because "it's the only event where major organizations come together. I had always hoped that this would create a trend and become a tendency in the community," and he was happy to hear commitments for leaders for even more cooperation and joint events.

"It is very nice tonight, and I come to these events to encourage these organizations to go further," he said. "I wish that all community organizations would see that life is much easier, and success is much easier when people cooperate rather than spend their time guarding their turf."

If communities can have resolutions, a number of the guests agreed that would be a very good one for our own.