

AGAPW Celebrates Women's History Month, Honors Amb. Eleni Tsakopoulos

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – The Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) celebrated Women's History Month with their annual "Greek American Woman of the Year" Award Gala Honoring Ambassador Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis in Midtown Manhattan on March 27.

The guests were welcomed by AGAPW founder and president Olga Alexakos, who expressed great pride in presenting Tsakopoulos Kounalakis, the first Greek-American woman to serve as a U.S. ambassador.

AGAPW's Excellence Tuition Scholarship in the amount of \$3000 was also awarded in honor of Tsakopoulos Kounalakis to Kristina Bogos, a student at NYU, by Dr. Liana Theodoratou, director of NYU's A.S. Onassis Program in Hellenic Studies. Bogos' studies began with a focus on journalism, but she was soon also drawn to Hellenic studies, and she is also interested in law. She is proud to be the first member of her family after a number of generations in America to speak Greek again.

AGAPW was established four years ago and Alexakos said she looks forward to many celebra-



(L-R) Christina Feggoudakis, Maria Christodoulou, Deana Koulosousas Spatola, Olga Alexakos, Amb. Eleni Kounalakis, Penny Tsilas, Irene Sarri, Evgenia Soldatos, Vaia Trittas.

tions to come, in New York and in other states from which there have been inquiries regarding opening chapters.

The remarkable women she has met through AGAPW prompted her to issue a wider message: "Professional Greek women are the new face of the Greek-American communities and we need to incorporate them into our organizations...

Times have changed. There is a new Greek-American woman," she said.

Vaia Trittas of New York University, AGAPW's 2013 Excellence Tuition Scholarship recipient, was the event's MC and Evgenia Soldatos made a presentation on "The Significance of Women's History Month and The Historical Contributions of Greek American Women to our

remarks at the gathering.

Alexakos also noted the attendance of Amb. Loucas Tsilas, Executive Director of the Onassis Foundation (USA), for his support of AGAPW "from the beginning," along with his wife, Penelope.

Penelope Tsilas introduced Amb. Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis and undertook a brief but interesting interview of the honoree while the two were seated in chairs at the front of the penthouse suite of the renowned Manhattan club that was the event's venue.

The ambassador spoke of the challenges she faced in transitioning from business executive to diplomat – she expressed deep appreciation and admiration for her career foreign service colleagues – and balancing work and family life.

Her experience in government and business has caused her to conclude that "women can have it all, just not at the same time," and it was noted by a number of people that the necessary social infrastructure has yet to be built, including adequate childcare and eldercare, and adjustments in corporate and government culture that will enable both men and women to share fairly the re-

sponsibilities and joys of raising a family.

Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis cited Anne-Marie Slaughter, whose essay in the Atlantic, Why Women Still Can't Have It All, broke open the issue. Slaughter has declared that serious change will happen only when women are elected president and comprise half of Congress.

The speaking program was preceded by a reception and afterwards the guests were entertained with music performed by sitarist and composer of world fusion music Nana Simopoulos and Caryn Heilman.

AGAPW is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, charitable and educational organization. It was founded in New York City in March of 2010 and it is an independent organization, started by and run by women on a volunteer, pro bono basis. The organization is seeking to expand career opportunities and promote community and leadership building among Greek-American professional women by forging collaborations among ourselves and establishing partnerships with other organizations inside and outside the Greek-American community," according to agapw.org.

AHEPA Journey Program Connects U.S. Youth to Their Greek Homeland

TNH Staff

WASHINGTON, DC – The Order of AHEPA is now accepting applications for the 2014 session of its popular Journey-to-Greece program.

Ethnic groups in America, even the most successful ones, like the Greeks, have learned some important lessons the hard way. One is that it is not automatic that the descendants of immigrants will retain their fervor for the homeland and its language, especially when it is not spoken at home as intermarriage rates climb.

The Order of AHEPA is among the community groups that realized early on that there no substitute for imagination, hard work and proper resources when it comes to helping young Greek-Americans connect with Greece.

In 1968 AHEPA began the community's first program of bringing Greek American youth to Greece in an effort to keep the young generation connected to Greece and their historical homeland. Two years later, the Archdiocese's Ionian Village was

established.

Since 1968 AHEPA has sent over thousands of young people to Greece to provide an educational and cultural connection to Greece.

AHEPA has also partnered with many schools and the ministry of education to benefit their youth. In 2003 the AHEPA Educational Foundation partnered with the University of Indianapolis (Athens Campus) to begin offering accredited educational opportunities with the yearly student excursion. Since 2003 more than 200 students have transferred over 650 credits to schools in the United States.

According to AHEPA, its "Educational Foundation continues to increase the quality of the AHEPA Journey to Greece program, expanding its educational spectrum while maintaining or reducing the existing per student cost. The AHEPA Educational Foundation continues to award Journey to Greece stipends (scholarships) ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 in individual increments. The Journey to Greece is a beneficial program

for our students and future leaders of Hellenism."

For the 2014 summer schedule, the Journey-to-Greece (JTG) will offer two sessions (between two separate schools) consisting of three-to-four week programs for 80 young people. The programs will include visits guided by scholars to archeological sites and museums, and excursions to Sterea Ellas, the Peloponnese, Thessaly, Macedonia, and the islands of Hydra, Poros, and Aegina.

This academic and cultural experience offers students the added advantage of being able to earn three to nine undergraduate college transfer credits.

This educational program, which combines educational activity with exposure to the culture, history and traditions of Greece, presents the treasures of their ethnic legacy to Greek-American youth.

The program also advances the broader mission of the AHEPA family, which is to promote the Ancient Greek ideals of philanthropy, education, civic responsibility, and family and individual excellence through com-



A recent Journey-to-Greece group takes a break from its fun on Mykonos for a commemorative photo. This year's journey will visit the islands of Hydra, Poros, and Aegina.

munity service and volunteerism.

There are no restrictions on applicants who are interested in participating in The Journey to Greece program, however, students must be college bound high school seniors or current college attendees in good standing.

Although the AHEPA Educational Foundation is not affiliated with the AHEPA Educational Foundation,

The University of Indianapolis supplies the facilities and is the managing partner of the program. The academic services are provided through Webster College and The American College/Deree, which offer accredited university credit and operate in Athens.

Applications and a program description can be found at the AHEPA website at www.ahepa.org.

Top Colleges Accept St. D Students

By Helen Karagiorgos

Traditionally, April is a stressful month for high school seniors as they wait to hear which colleges and universities have accepted them for the fall semester. For several students at St. Demetrios, "good news" came early as they heard from prestigious universities and colleges that they had been accepted with lucrative scholarships.

Ioanna Katehis, the Valedictorian for the Class of 2014, was accepted to nearly every college/university to which she applied, including Sophie Davis School of Medicine, Cornell University, University of Health Sciences (Philadelphia), St. John's University College of Pharmacy, the Macaulay Honors College of the City University of New York, Stony Brook University, and Fordham University.

What makes this young lady stand out is the fact that the schools that have accepted her are especially competitive and only accept a fraction of the applicants. For example, Sophie Davis and Macaulay take less than 100 students in their college freshman class. As a Quest Bridge Scholarship finalist, Katehis pursued the application process rigorously and maintained a 97 average throughout high school while also engaging in numerous extracurricular activities such as athletics, traditional Greek dance, community service, and a part-time job.

Katehis is most interested in pursuing college studies in Biology/Chemistry with the goal of becoming a professional in the field of medicine. She has been a student at St. Demetrios School since pre-Kindergarten and she is fluent in both Greek and English, speaking and writing the languages with ease. Recently Katehis, along with Saluatorian Maria Papadopoulos, were invited to represent young Greek-Americans at a forum in Constantinople (Istanbul) honoring the Greek poet/writer Georgios Seferis. His works and the influence that Seferis had on Hellenic literature and poetry. Papadopoulos has also been

a student of the St. Demetrios School system since pre-Kindergarten. She is a born leader who does not hesitate to represent her school and her community at any event; she has maintained a 96 average throughout high school while also earning commendations for her athletic achievements in soccer and basketball.

Papadopoulos is active in the Pontian Society "Kommnoi" and is an active member of the Greek Orthodox Youth Association at St. Demetrios Cathedral. She has volunteered her time as a peer tutor and teacher assistant since the 9th grade, making significant differences in the lives of elementary school students who were struggling academically. She has been accepted to the combined BA/MS Speech Communications/Disorders program at Long Island University (Brooklyn campus), Fordham University, Hunter College, Queens College, Adelphi University, and Loyola University (Maryland). Maria aspires to work with children in the school environment as a speech therapist.

Fani Tzikas and Panagiotis Tsampas were also students of the St. Demetrios School system since pre-Kindergarten, before moving to Greece at the end of the 5th grade, where they completed elementary school and began their high school studies. Two years ago both returned to New York due to the economic crisis in Greece and for the opportunity to pursue their studies in the United States. They both also returned to their "roots," St. Demetrios, where they excelled in all academic subjects, especially math and science.

Along with Katehis and Papadopoulos, Tzikas and Tsampas studied college level courses at St. John's University, Mercy College, and Long Island University. They did well on the critical SAT and TOEFL exams, which allowed them to apply and be accepted to colleges/universities throughout the country. Tzikas, who is a volunteer at the New York Hospital of Queens and is looking forward to studying premed, has been accepted to Al-

bany College of Pharmacy and Medicine, Drexel University, New York Institute of Technology, Pace University, St. John's University College of Pharmacy, Long Island University Honors Program, and Hunter College. Tsampas would like to become an engineer; he will be studying Mechanics and Computer Science at the Grove School of Engineering at City College, which accepts only 100 applicants per year. Tsampas was also accepted to Manhattan College School of Engineering and the New York Institute of Technology.

Charles Athanasopoulos is also a success story of the Class of 2014. He is a nationally-recognized debate champion who has competed and won several titles in the field in which he has participated since the 7th grade. Athanasopoulos came to St. Demetrios in the 9th grade after attending public schools. As the child of mixed heritage, he is proud of his ethnic backgrounds and looks forward to assisting the needy from all backgrounds as an attorney in the future. Because of his ease and articulation of the English language as a debater, Athanasopoulos was awarded several valuable scholarships to study at New York University, Wake Forest, Binghamton University, and University of California (Irvine). These institutions have offered to provide him with housing and other accommodations as part of his acceptances.

This list of students is just a small sample of the senior class students who have made the Greek-American community of Astoria proud of their achievements. This year's senior class was a dynamic group that was actively involved in academic and extracurricular affairs that signify their strengths, motivation, and pride. As the month progresses, we are certain that all of the students above and the rest of the senior class will have more good news about college/university acceptances to report.

Helen Karagiorgos is a College Advisor at St. Demetrios High School.

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