



## AGAPW Celebrates Woman of the Year

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2014 | BY CONSTANTINE S. SIRIGOS



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 celebrations 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 Country and Community."

City Councilman Costas Constantinides presented Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis with a proclamation from New York's City Council and Alexakos acknowledged the newest "representatives of the homelands" Michel Spinellis, Greece's ambassador to the U.S. and Amb. Vasilios Philippou, Cyprus's consul general in New York, who offered 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 Tsillas 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 responsibilities 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.