

## Gay Day Finally Comes to Greece

### Greek Parliament legalizes same-sex civil partnerships

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece's parliament has overwhelmingly approved legislation legalizing civil partnerships for gay couples, two years after the country was condemned by a European human rights court for discrimination.

In a result announced early Wednesday, lawmakers voted 193-56 in favor of the bill to extend civil partnerships to same-sex couples, but provisions regarding family law that could pave the way for adoption applications by gay couples were dropped before the vote.

Conservative bishops in Greece's powerful Orthodox Church vehemently opposed the law, arguing that it undermined the institution of family.

"Homosexuality is a deviation from the laws of nature. It is a social crime, a sin. Those who experience or support it are not normal people," said Bishop Amvrosios of the southern town of Kalavryta, where church bells tolled in opposition to the bill.

In a 2013 ruling, the Council of Europe's Court of Human Rights found that Greek legislation was discriminatory and ordered Greece to pay damages to the gay couples who brought the lawsuit.

Civil partnerships, introduced in 2008, are favored by couples seeking legal rights without getting married or who are deterred by lengthy divorce procedures. But same-sex couples were barred from civil partnerships.

Lawmakers from the governing leftist Syriza party backed the bill, standing to clap when it passed, while the main opposition conservatives were split on the vote. The human rights group Amnesty International called the new law a "significant and historic step in the right direction."

Several hundred pro-gay rights protesters gathered outside parliament before the vote, under a large banner that read "Love is the law." "This is a good start, even though this law doesn't cover everything," Philippos Paganis, a 21-year-old member of the gay rights group Colour Youth, told the AP. "We want to keep up the pressure ... for same-sex marriages to be allowed — that gives you more rights — and to make it easier for people to declare their gender," he said.

The new legislation allowing civil partnerships for same-sex couples is expected to take effect early next year once it is published in the government gazette.

## Archdiocese Spotlights SNF Gift

NEW YORK — The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America issued a special announcement about two gifts honoring the memory of the late Archbishop Iakovos. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) has donated more than \$2 million, and its co-President Andreas Dracopoulos made a personal donation exceeding \$1 million for the Reflection Area of the National African American Museum of History & Culture, in Washington, DC, to be named after Archbishop Iakovos.

Dracopoulos told TNH that he and SNF made the donations in Iakovos name, "who dared under very difficult conditions of that time to march alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1965 Selma, AL civil rights march.

The Iakovos area will be a

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TNH/COSTAS BEJ

### The Cathedral School's Children Light Up Upper East Side

The Christmas pageant of The Cathedral School of the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity had delightful students filled with holiday spirit in the spotlight in Manhattan.

## Antonellos' Entrepreneurial Spirit

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK — The Greek-American community's youth is not only its future — it is its most dynamic present element. New Jersey's Greek American Chamber of Commerce, whose slogan is "connecting and promoting Hellenic Professional and Businesses, knows that, and it recently presented its Young Entrepreneur Award to Nikos Antonellos.

The 25-year old founder and President of Sidekicks Support Service, whose services to special needs children is life enhancing for them and virtually life-saving for their parents, shared the story of the remarkable firm he established as a college student three years ago.

His upbringing is typical, but his success at such a young age,

even in the high achieving Greek-American community is extraordinary in both commercial and humanitarian terms.

His parents, George and Kathy, raised him and his younger brother Stefano in Hamilton, near Trenton, NJ. He grew up in the family restaurant and told TNH "we were always involved with the Church; we would always help out at the Greek festival — I would cut the gyros."

Growing up he was heavily into soccer. "I lived and breathed soccer." His passion and ability earned him a partial scholarship to play four years on the varsity team at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

He majored in business administration with a concentration in entrepreneurship, so he had plan in case he did not reach the pros.

Antonellos enjoyed courses like New Venture Creation and Business and Society in addition to the basic marketing and management classes which he also liked.

While his professors were full timers, he agrees that some of the many successful Greek-American business persons should consider sharing their knowledge and experiences with young people as adjunct professors.

REAL WORLD THRIVING Sidekicks was actually born in college. "It was a final project," he told TNH, and originally he was going to establish a breakfast sandwich place, deep in his comfort zone.

But said to himself "Why not venture out? I have been doing the food thing all my life."

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## Mitsotakis Has ND Momentum as Jan. 10 Runoff Looms Big Now

ATHENS — An election for the leadership of main opposition New Democracy Party (ND) has failed to produce a clear winner and a runoff will take place on January 10, Party officials said.

Evangelos Meimarakis, 62, a former Parliament speaker and minister and the Party's acting leader from July to November 2015, won some 40 percent of the party members' vote. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, 47, a former Administrative Reform Minister whose father was a Prime Minister, won second place with about 30 percent.

Turnout for the Dec. 20 elections was unusually high, with more than 400,000 party faithful turning out as the Conservatives try to reassemble themselves after taking twin beatings this year at the hands of the ruling Radical Left SYRIZA, which triumphed in January and then again in snap elections on Sept. 20, when Meimarakis was the interim chief.

The leadership rivals are considered moderate, with Mitsotakis seen as the reform candi-

date and Meimarakis representing the entrenched party interests but maintaining strong support despite being trashed by Prime Minister and SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras.

The runoff is required because no candidate got the 50 percent needed to win outright, with the other challengers, Central Macedonia Regional Governor Apostolos Tzitzikostas, at 20 percent, and former Health Minister Adonis Georgiadis, at 12 percent, winding up as also-rans.

Georgiadis immediately declared his support for his former cabinet colleague Mitsotakis. "I will support his candidacy for three reasons," said Georgiadis.

"Firstly, because I feel the time for renewal has come. Secondly, because it is important for two people with different ideologies to cooperate and help the entire party express itself. And, thirdly, because Kyriakos and I have already worked together perfectly and imple-

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### Greek Lights up Bay Ridge for Christmas

Isidoros Bilarikis from Chios, the owner of Athens Home Contracting, also known as Sam Bilas, is known as well for having the best-decorated house in Brooklyn for Christmas. His Bay Ridge residence attracts admirers from near and far.

## Constantina Rhodes: The Power of Intuition

By Penelope Karageorge

Remember when you got that vibe, followed your instincts — rationality had nothing to do with it -- met that person and lived happily ever after? Or did not follow a hunch and lived to regret it. Human beings are gifted with intuition. The famous Oracle at Delphi clued in Solon, and he listened. Constantina Rhodes, a charming, hyper-perceptive Ph.D., is a certified intuitive. She walks the talk, teaching others how to develop their intuitive powers, and gives private readings. "People come for a psychic reading often when they've exhausted all the regular avenues," Constantina

says. "The most frequent questions I'm asked have to do with major changes regarding love, career and where to live. Ninety-nine percent of the people I consult with say it's great."

Science has begun to take intuition seriously. Innovator Steve Jobs called it "more powerful than intellect." The U.S. Military is investigating the power of intuition, how it helps troops to make decisions and save lives. Arianna Huffington, author of Thrive, wrote: "Even when we're not at a fork in the road, wondering what to do and trying to hear that inner voice, our intuition is always there, always reading the situation, always trying to steer us the right

way. But can we hear it?"

Says Constantina: "Many people get psychic impressions — like you know somebody is going to call you. But there's a way to train yourself so that you can tap into that, pay attention to how your body feels with information. So when I teach, I tell people it's like art or music. Some people are born with an exceptionally beautiful voice, some with an ordinary voice, but at whatever the starting point, if you train, if you learn the grammar of it, and the basics, and how it works in your human instrument, you can develop it"

Constantina's main professional focus is teaching the His-

tory of Religion at New York City's Hunter College. She's the author of several books, including those based on her own Sanskrit translations. She did not come immediately to her calling.

"I've always been intuitive, but I'm also very intellectual and rational. I had a lot of spiritual experiences growing up, but I never really connected them."

Living in Tampa, FL with her husband and daughter, she was searching.

"There were so many things I was trying to figure out. I was teaching world religions there. For my doctoral work, I had

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## Poulias Bros. Enlighten the Guatemalans

By Maria Iliou

In the context of a recent trip to Latin America, I found myself a few weeks ago in Guatemala, a country that impressed me both for its natural beauty and interesting environment and also for the presence of a vibrant Greek community and the existence of a unique foundation established by the Poulias Brothers.

Guatemala is a rapidly-changing society. The locals like to emphasize that Guatemala is a country in the process of redefining itself. There is the feeling in the air that its social and political life is now evolving fast for the better. A new middle class is in the process of being formed and the political environment has become much more openly democratic in nature since the end of the civil war in 1996. And it has started to make visible steps toward shedding past phenomena of substantial corruption, particularly after the recent presidential vote and the events that preceded it.

Guatemala, Costa, Rica and Panama are the only countries in Latin America that enjoy a high rate of growth, and this, despite that a very substantial part of the population continues to live in a condition of object poverty and social isolation.

Its capital, Guatemala City, is home to many foreign nationals and organized minorities among which the Greek Community, though very small in overall numbers, has already been noted for substantial accomplishments.

The first Greeks to arrive in the country were the Papahiou family more than 50 years ago, soon followed by the Dimitraki family from Crete, successful in mattress manufacturing. There

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AP PHOTO/PETROS GIANNAKOURIS

### It's Winter in USA and Greece — But it Feels like X-Mas in Rio

A man reads a newspaper in front of changing cabins on Alimos beach near Athens, on Wednesday, Dec. 23. Temperatures have been unseasonably warm across many parts of Europe in the past few days, and temperatures in Athens were expected to reach 17° C (63° Fahrenheit).

## 10 Books for Greek-Am. Bibliophiles

By Stephanie Nikolopoulos

Whether you're looking for a stocking stuffer or a stack of books for a bibliophile, here is a diverse selection of books written in English by Greeks and Greek-Americans. All were published or reissued in 2015.

**For the person with opinionated family:** Exploring themes of dysfunction and food, Annie Lionatas's novel Let Me Explain You (Scribner) tells what happens when irascible diner owner Stavros Mavarakis emails his former wife and three grown daughters about how they can improve their lives — and then disappears.

**For the sunbather with a taste for scandal:** A bored married couple in the Midwest test the tipping point between fan-

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# Special Tour for Special Donors of the New Saint Nicholas at WTC

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – While the dollar amount of the pledges to the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox National Shrine is impressive - \$35.76 million to date - communities rooted in humble origins in homelands like Greece are still touched by in-kind contributions, and on December 21 the principals and families of the Titan Group and Corona Ready Mix received a special tour of the construction site at Ground Zero in appreciation of their donating all the concrete for the new Church.

Father Alexander Karloutsos, Protosphyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Archdiocese's Executive Director of Administration Jerry Dimitriou led the tour on a crisp winter's day and St. Nicholas project assistant Andrew Veniopoulos was also present to answer questions.

Fr. Karloutsos noted that since the new church will rise from ground 25 feet above the rest of Ground Zero, it can be properly called an acropolis, which brought to mind another noble donation. The Venus Marble Group is providing the Church with its translucent outer skin, marble from Mount Pentelikon, the source of the Parthenon's marble.

Chairman P.J. Mechanical Corp. Peter J. Pappas Sr. can be said to have provided the guts of the building, all the heating and ventilation systems.

"This will be one of the most unique churches in the Archdiocese and it will become a national shrine," Fr. Karloutsos said, because it will be a symbol of religious freedom, tolerance, righteousness and reconciliation. There will be a bereavement center...and there will be interactive technology that will give people the opportunity to learn about our Church history and the legacy of the Greeks in America."

He noted that Ellis Island was nearby and that for decades when Greek immigrants arrived, crying at the sight of the Statue of Liberty, the first place they went to was St. Nicholas to light a candle.

"We are carrying on a great legacy," he said, and turning to the guests he told them "you are literally building the foundation with your concrete, and I want

to express the gratitude of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and all the faithful."

Among the guests was George Stamas, co-Founder of The Hellenic Initiative.

**CONCRETE FLOOR TO BE LAID IN JANUARY**  
Dimitriou told TNH the concrete for the Church's floor will be poured in second week of January and explained that the delay was due to the decision to take extra care with and build some redundancy into the HVAC systems and to add pipes for possible future wiring needs since the interstitial space housing them between the floor and roof of the VSC will be difficult to access once the concrete is poured.



ABOVE: Officials of the Titan Group and Corona Ready Mix, which donated the concrete for St. Nicholas, with family members, proudly line up behind banner created for the special event. LEFT: Meticulous care is being taken with the heating and cooling systems of the St. Nicholas Shrine at Ground Zero before the concrete floor is laid as planned in January 2016. LEFT BOTTOM: Twenty stories high, one can see Santiago Calatrava's new St. Nicholas taking shape. The main part is round, supporting a dome modelled on that of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.



Guests were delighted to see that Liberty Park, which will be the Church's court yard, is nearing completion, most trees, bushes and paving stones in place.

Karloutsos pointed to all the activity and structures and declared "this is our community" and noted with pride that Greek-Americans are the only

ethnic group that has been permitted to build a church on government land, due to the fact that St. Nicholas was the only house of worship destroyed on 9/11.

Corona Ready Mix co-owners Paul Melis and John Vasilantonakis were present, the former with his children Ariana and Nicholas latter with his wife Eve

and children Steven, Stella Marie, and Gabriele.

They hosted a luncheon afterwards where Melis acknowledged the presence of Frs. Paul Palesty, Pastor of St. Nicholas in Flushing and Fr. Damaskinos Ganas of Kimisis in Brooklyn "who have always been there for our families...and we appreciate all the hard work you do."

Melis is proud to help build "a national shrine of Greek Orthodoxy...and a sanctuary to remember the souls lost on 9/11. May it stand proudly for generations to come."

Asked why they gave the gift, he told TNH that he and Vasilantonakis "are thankful for the good blessings we were given as a family, and the opportunity to give back to the community and pass down our traditions to the next generation is the greatest legacy anyone can have."

Titan Group CEO Dimitri Papalexopoulos participated with his wife Amy Galanos and daughter Marina, and expressing appreciation was also a factor for Titan.

Papalexopoulos revealed that Aris Papadopoulos, past CEO of Titan America, was at Ground Zero on September 11, 2001. "His survival was a miracle. He

had a 9:00 AM appointment with the Port Authority on the 85th floor...but a colleague told him 'let's get a cup of coffee. It's OK to be five minutes late.'"

CEO Titan America Bill Zarkalis was accompanied by other top company officials and his wife Colleen. He told TNH "this is a remarkable day for us. We are very proud to participate in the rebuilding on St. Nicholas. Titan is an international company and wherever we conduct business we want to be members of the community."

Melis told TNH that Titan sends the material and Corona Ready Mix produces the concrete and delivers it. Despite being a non-union company, by working closely with the Archdiocese's representative, Peter Karamitsanis, and they were able to get their truck onto the Port Authority site.

**HOW IT IS DONE AND KEPT ON TRACK**

Karamitsanis, the President of Lighthouse Advisors, provided TNH with some details about the construction process. He and David Puza of Merritt Construction Services of Connecticut oversee the construction of St. Nicholas. "We make

sure the schedules and the budgets are kept," a major responsibility on a Santiago Calatrava construction project.

The reason being that the spectacular effects the renowned architect creates - St. Nicholas will glow and literally light up the night sky at Ground Zero - are the result of intricate parts and processes.

Working with Calatrava and Nicholas Koutsomitris, the architect of record, Karamitsanis told TNH the company oversees "the whole design and technical team and construction." His company has 17 years' experience in specialty construction, including another Calatrava project.

He explained that "Calatrava buildings have no tolerances. They are designed to exact measurements, so the form work the Church is very complicated...we will have fulltime surveyors laying out every bolt, piece, and form to make sure when everything comes together they actually fit."

"What Calatrava presented to Archbishop Demetrios is a church that will glow at night like 10,000 candles," he said, and to make that happen, the church's translucent outer shell that is attached to the concrete inner structure will be back lit, and its creation is a complex undertaking.

"It is made of a piece of glass, a piece of marble and another piece of glass. The marble is cut in Mount Pentelikon; it goes to Germany to be cut down to three millimeters thickness and is polished, then it goes to Austria where it is fused with the glass," he said.

The pieces then go to Minneapolis, where they are put onto panels, which are then brought to New York. After the supporting metalwork is applied to the inner concrete shell, the panels are attached.

Karamitsanis, whose parents are from near Corinth - he grew up in Athens and earned his architecture degree at the University of Michigan - says the concrete inner shell should be up within 10 or eleven months, and then the interior work will begin and the marble/glass panels will be attached.

"The dome will probably be ready by the end of 2016 and...we expect to finish in late summer, early fall 2017," he said.



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## Catsimatidis Family Hosts Christmas Party

ABOVE (TOP): The Fifth Avenue home of the Catsimatidis family is filled with friends and family enjoying Christmas fellowship - and the spectacular orchids, welcome any season.

ABOVE: Left to right: John, Margo, John Jr., and Andrea Catsimatidis excuse themselves from their many friends to pose for a special holiday photo during their annual Christmas party.

LEFT: Businessman and philanthropist John Catsimatidis greets a guest and offers to take her photo in front of a doorway in his Manhattan home festooned with Christmas decorations.



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# Where's the Beef? The IRS Says It Was in Nicholas Koudanis' Safe

A family which for 40 years has run a popular eatery – Nick's Famous Roast Beef – in a city north of Boston, has been charged by the Internal Revenue Service with hiding more than \$1 million a year in cash to avoid taxes.

The IRS said that Nicholas Koudanis, 65, and his wife Beverly, 60, had some \$1,635,658 in cash stashed in a safe in their home in nearby Topsfield, and that their son helped them in a conspiracy to defraud, according to an indictment against them, the Boston Business Journal and Boston Globe reported.

The allegations are that the family, with the assistance of Nick Markos, skimmed the money from the cash-only business in a backroom and split it up while the husband and wife tucked it away for the last six years. The

charges include that they doctored tax returns to hide their criminal activity.

Steven Koudanis, 39, of Peabody, was charged with endeavoring to obstruct and impede the due administration of the Internal Revenue Laws.

The lawyers representing Nick Koudanis and Eleni Koudanis, Robert Weinberg and Robert Goldstein, said in a joint statement via email: "Nicholas and Eleni Koudanis each clearly asserted in court (Monday) that they were not guilty while denying the tax allegations brought against them. These tax charges are just allegations — not proof, not evidence. Mr. and Mrs. Koudanis are presumed innocent and each intends to strongly contest the current claims."

Lawyers for Markos and Steven Koudanis couldn't be

reached for comment.

The IRS said the family would report an amount far less than the actual total as revenue for the cash-only business, a common practice in Greece where tax cheats often go uncaught and lightly punished when they are, rarely going to jail.

The government alleges Nick Koudanis and Markos also paid some vendors and employees in cash to reduce their tax costs.

The indictment states that over six years, Nick Koudanis and Markos "diverted approximately \$5.9 million in cash from Nick's to themselves, their wives and their employees."

Nick and Eleni Koudanis avoided paying \$992,821 in federal taxes, the indictment alleges, and Markos avoided paying \$1 million in federal taxes.

Steven Koudanis is accused by



The sign could soon read "Nick's Infamous Roast Beef." The Beverly, MA restaurant's owners were indicted in Federal Court for skimming nearly \$6 million in cash receipts.

the government of "creating false cash register receipts in amounts generally consistent with the cash accounts, for the purpose of being used in any audit by tax authorities."

The charge of conspiracy to defraud carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000; each tax charge carries a sentence of up to three years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

The business hit the 40-year milestone this year and has built a loyal clientele for its sandwiches and late hours of operation, up to 10PM and sometimes later.

Photos throughout the restaurant depict tourists holding their "Nick's Roast Beef" bumper sticker at locales ranging from Mt. Everest to the Sydney Opera

House, Forbes magazine reported.

An IRS audit in 2013 showed sales of about \$1 million when the government claims that it was really over \$2.3 million. There were similar ratios of real income versus the alleged doctored amounts in other years.

Joel Androphy, a defense attorney not involved with this case told Forbes that the Federal government can easily target small businesses that tend to be less sophisticated in their business practices and financial controls.

"Businesses like this are low hanging fruit for prosecutors," Androphy said, "which is a shame because large corporations are skating around paying taxes because of the inefficiency of the IRS Whistleblower program."

The charges, in the case of Nick's filing false tax returns and

obstruction, do not carry long prison terms, but prosecutors are known for adding more charges later in order to pressure defendants into a guilty plea, the magazine said.

In cases involving large amounts of cash, that could mean money laundering charges and that could lead to more than a decade in prison. "Nobody should cheat," Androphy said, "but the rich and large corporations can fight the government in a way the small businessman cannot."

Cash-based businesses face tighter looks from the IRS than do large corporations with legions of lawyers to defend them.

Nick's is a popular spot for its roast beef sandwiches and a gathering spot for a wide array of customers, including cops, firefighters, doctors, and others.

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The red, green, and silver tinsel indicate that Christmas is in the air, but the sponge boat captains unloading their latest catches reveal the unmistakably Greek quality of Tarpon Springs, FL - more specifically, a flavor of the Dodecanese Islands, and most specifically, the sponge-industry-immersed island of Kalymnos.



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# Conductor Yorgos Kouritas Shines in a Feast of Lights

By Vasilis Papoutsis

MISSION VIEJO, CA – A Feast of Lights is a traditional Christmas concert offered by the Saddleback College Choirs and Symphony department in Mission Viejo, CA for more than 25 years. The concert is a community institution and regularly sells out its performances as it features old and new Christmas classics for chorus and orchestra.

Dr. Yorgos Kouritas and Dr. Scott Farthing were the two conductors who led the more than 100 members of the orchestra and chorus. The result was an inspiring and uplifting Christmas concert that ended with a sing-along that included some crowd favorites such as Here Comes Santa Claus, Twelve Days of Christmas and Jingle Bell Rock. Kouritas joined Saddleback College in 2012, bringing a wealth of experience in having conducted both in Europe and Canada.

He hails from Volos and talk-



More than 100 members of the orchestra and chorus led by conductors Dr. Yorgos Kouritas and Dr. Scott Farthing presented "A Feast of Lights" in Mission Viejo, CA.

ing about his decision to follow a path in classical music at a time when classical music was not very accessible to most kids in Greece in the 1990's. He told TNH that "when the new music academy opened in Volos my parents signed me up for violin lessons there. Shortly afterward,

I decided that I wanted to become a conductor." He continued his studies with the Russian pedagogue Rimma Sushanskaya at the Birmingham Conservatoire in England. As a conducting fellow at the Castleton festival he received great reviews by the Washington Times and the

Washington Post. He has since conducted various orchestras among them the Richmond Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony and the Manhattan School of Music Symphony.

Prior to arriving here, Kouritas was the Assistant Conductor of the Boise Philharmonic and

the Music Director of the Boise Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. His impressive credentials were undoubtedly the deciding factor when he applied for the position of Director of Instrumental Studies at the Saddleback College, as he had to compete against 300 other applicants for the position! Speaking about the college the conductor said that "it is a great honor to be part of an institution with such fine musical tradition." The college is proud to call some of the finest musicians of the Pacific Symphony as its instructors and some distinguished violinists such as Eric Silberger and Martin Beaver have hosted master classes.

Kouritas teaches violin and viola and performs violin recitals. Saddleback College is also one of the few colleges in the state that offers the students the opportunity to perform in operas and opera scenes each semester. The complete list of concerts is available at [www.saddleback.edu](http://www.saddleback.edu).

# AGAPW Holiday Loft Party Raises Scholarship Funds

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – The wonderful studio loft of artists Michael and Niki Kapsalis was the scene of the 2105 Holiday Benefit Celebration of the Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) on December 11 where guests were welcomed by its President and Founder, Olga Alexakos.

People came and went throughout the evening enjoying food, fellowship – and art. The warm space was decorated with the work of Niki and Michael Kapsalis, jewelry, and abstract expressionist paintings respectively.

Exceptional paintings grace the walls, but dozens of canvases tucked into the stalls at the end of the huge living room/studio beckoned and some guests said they hoped to see them one day.

The party was also the occasion for raising funds to benefit the AGAPW Excellence Tuition Scholarship fund. Among the items available for auction were photographs by AGAPW Vice President/Community Liaison Aphrodite Désirée Navab.

Guests who bought raffles won jewelry created by Niki Kapsalis and designer scarves made by Sopia Alimonos.

Niki Kapsalis has been creating jewelry for a long time, but she made a radical break –literally and figuratively– after a trip to Croatia for years ago, where jewelry making is taught in its schools on a high level. "I told my sister I wanted everything I saw," and when she returned to Greece she destroyed what she had created up to that point and began anew. She also makes clothing which is both for personal use and commercial purposes.

Niki is also passionate about AGAPW and its mission. "I met Olga by a stroke of luck through a good friend who brought her one day to our loft," she said, and they immediately became close friends. She was thrilled to host the event.

Alexakos told TNH "We were blessed to celebrate another Holiday Season with family and friends! Our generous hosts and supporters Niki and Michael Kapsalis opened their Soho Studio loft for us so we were surrounded by great art!"

She summarized what she called "another active year for AGAPW" – among the many things she said she is thankful for during the holiday season – and has been busy with the Board planning for 2016. "Our events have become great networking opportunities for women as well as for men, of various professional backgrounds. We share information and support one another," she said.

AGAPW events, Alexakos said, also enable Greek Americans "to connect with their heritage and build their professional relations within the community." "The Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, charitable and educational... and is an independent organization, started by and run by women on a volunteer, pro bono basis. Its mission is 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," according to agapw.org.

# The Byzantine Choir and School of Byzantine Music Sings Out

By Theodore Kalmoukos

NEW YORK. The year 2010 marked the establishment of the men's Byzantine choir of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, which possesses an authentic ecclesiastical character and performs hymns solely in the Greek language. The choir was the initiative of Archbishop Demetrios. It is comprised of young Greek-Americans who possess a mastery of the Greek language and Byzantine music, being cantors at various communities of the Direct Archdiocesan District in New York. The choir is under the care and promotion of Archdeacon Panteleimon Papadopoulos.

In speaking with the National Herald, Archdeacon Panteleimon, who has been serving as Archdeacon to Archbishop Demetrios with exemplary faithfulness and dedication for fifteen years, and is himself both vocally gifted and well-versed in Byzantine music, said that "His Eminence, our own Archbishop, is the one who inspired and created the choir." He underscored that "since we were noticing in our communities various cantors who had mastery of the music, and since I myself have a particular love and zeal for Byzantine music, the Archbishop said, 'Why don't we try to organize all these cantors and see what we can accomplish?' And so I invited some young cantors whom I knew, students of Archon Mousikodidakalos of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Nicholas Steliaros, and

these cantors became the nucleus."

He added that "we have as our choir director Dr. Demetrios Kehagias, who is a native of Astoria, a pharmacist, having completed studies at the Conservatory of Athens earning the distinction of 'Excellent' (Arista), a multi-talented individual and chief cantor of Kimisis parish in Brooklyn, NY."

The choir is comprised of thirty young people. Archdeacon Panteleimon is responsible for coordinating the choir's appearances and events at places such as: Constantinople, in honor of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew; the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Carnegie Hall in NYC, the Archdiocesan Cathedral of Holy Trinity in Manhattan; and most recently on December 12 at the church of St. George in Hartford, Connecticut. They are now preparing for an event at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which will be officially announced in the near future.

They meet weekly at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York for rehearsals.

According to Fr. Panteleimon, "The choir is comprised of only men because, as you know, Byzantine music is monophonic and it is difficult to have female voices participate." He indicated that "an effort is underway to create a female Byzantine choir."

Fr. Panteleimon has a deep appreciation for Byzantine music. He remarked, "I first heard



The Archdiocesan Byzantine Choir with His eminence Archbishop Demetrios.

Byzantine music from my father, who was a 'practical' cantor at St. George Church in Norwalk, Connecticut, being originally from Greece (specifically Ptolemaida). But I saw musical scores for the first time with Mr. Photios Ketszis during the three years I spent at Holy Cross Theological School, and from the time of my ordination in 2001 until 2013 I was the student of Archon Nicholas Steliaros. We went through all the major books and musical pieces of Byzantine music. He is a great person and teacher." Fr. Panteleimon had ini-

tially studied biology and later studied Theology because, as he shared with us, "from a young age I always wanted to be a priest."

He was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, but also told us, "I used to spend the summers with my grandmother and grandfather in Ptolemaida, and I have a first-cousin who is a priest who took me to Mount Athos and other religious sites throughout Greece."

Fr. Panteleimon works as closely with Archbishop Demetrios as anyone has. When we asked him what kind of per-

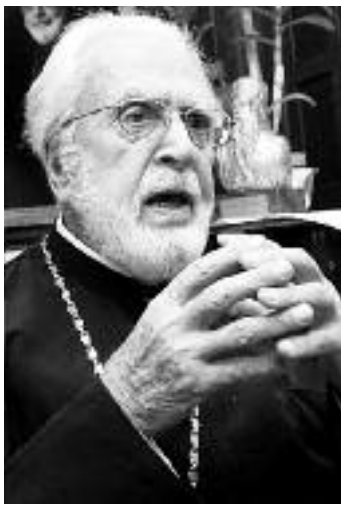
son the Archbishop is, he replied, "He is a man who teaches by his example. I have been by his side for fifteen years and I never once heard him raise his voice. He has never scolded me. I have never seen him lose his composure—not that he is indifferent, but that nothing disrupts his peace which is derived from his faith in God."

When we asked him how the Greek-Americans react when they hear the choir chanting—and only in Greek—he said, "They tell us that it's excellent; all the people are enthused by the power of the music."

Alongside the choir is the Archdiocesan School of Byzantine Music, which is housed at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. Archdeacon Panteleimon told us, "the school was founded by Archbishop Demetrios and basically began in September of 2010. From there came the idea of having the choir. Thus, as the young people from the music school advance, they participate in the choir as well." He also added, "We are at present offering lessons via Skype to five young people from different parts of the U.S., such as California, the Midwest, and Florida."

Thirty students are currently studying at the school and pay a tuition of \$500 per year. They are taught by Antonios Kehagias, Athanasios Minetos, and Fr. Panteleimon, who is also the school's director. The lessons take place all day on Saturdays, and Kehagias also offers weekday lessons at the Cultural Center of Astoria.

# Archdiocese Spotlights SNF Donation in Iakovos' Honor



The late Archbishop Iakovos.

Continued from page 1

place for reflection which "should make us reflect where we are as a community," Dracopoulos added, regarding Greek-Americans and Greece.

The News Release of the Archdiocese dated December 21st has as follows:

"The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America announces with appreciation and joy the creation of a special Reflection Area, named after our late Archbishop Iakovos, in the newly built National African-American History and Culture Museum in Washington, DC. This is made possible by the significant contribution of the Stavros Niarchos

Foundation for two million dollars and the personal contribution of Andreas Dracopoulos the SNF's Co-President, for one million. These grants were made in honor of Archbishop Iakovos' leadership and legacy in the area of civil and human rights.

The Museum, currently under construction, is expected to open in 2016, and it aspires to become a landmark that will house the African-American history.

In the middle of last month the museum featured a high-tech projection of images on its outside walls with the title "Commemorate and Celebrate Freedom," featuring the period from the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which ended slav-

ery in 1865, to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The images featured Archbishop Iakovos with Martin Luther King Jr. and The Washington Post published a first-page photograph of that moment in the projection, on Nov. 16, 2015.

The Greek Orthodox Church in America and His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios continue the longstanding legacy of Archbishop Iakovos to fight against racism and to defend human rights. The Greek Orthodox Church has always been an advocate for equality and continues to fight against racism, prejudice, and discrimination, while advancing reconciliation, love and justice for all."



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**HAPPY NEW YEAR, HEALTHY, BRIGHT and PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**

# Nikos Antonellos – Entrepreneurial and Philanthropic Passion Leader

Continued from page 1

He had been involved in volunteering, including with autism organizations and others with special needs, giving him experience in another field – and an appreciation of the needs of people less fortunate than himself.

“We all need mentors and people to look up to, and people with special needs don’t have the social skills to make friends and mentors...and they go through a lot every day, physically, mentally, and socially,” he said.

He also feels compassion for the parents.

“It’s tough to find a support outlet. They go day by day looking for the right support and I thought many problems could be solved by placing families with someone who has a background in the field, who wants to be there, and is understanding of the situation – and that’s what Sidekicks does,” he said. “We solve the problem of providing mentorship and parents have an extra support outlet that they can support and trust.”

**KICKSTARTING SIDEKICKS**  
He and his classmates presented their ideas in class and the students with the top three ideas were picked to be project

managers.

“Everyone voted for my idea and I was blown away by that,” he said. “Then I talked to some families about it and received nothing but amazing support. They said ‘you should really do this – this is such a big need and it would change our lives.’”

When the typical students’ job market frustrations began to gnaw at him, he refused to let it get him down.

“I always knew I wanted to do something meaningful and with a purpose and in college I decided one day just to do it,” he said, and one day after being denied another job he went to the school store, bought a notebook and began to plan.

That was about than three years ago.

“The company has really grown. We provide services to over 30 families, all different ages and types of disabilities. Over the course of our two years we have helped more than 60 families,” he said.

Sidekicks now has a contract with the State of New Jersey to provide individual support services and there is an agreement with Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield to provide certain therapies.

To manage the growth he has recruited more supervisors and are up to 50 total employees.

They are exploring expansion into New York. Once he is comfortable with the model in the current location, he plans to work on it with the aim of transplanting it elsewhere.

“Growth is tough. It’s a new beast to handle and I am taking my time,” he said.

“People who start a business forget the fact that what worked in the beginning” will require changes once it starts to grow. He added, “There are more issues, and people to manage, more things on your plate in the same 24 hours of the day,” plus provision must be made for the unexpected, emphasizing that one cannot always be on the defensive.

“You must remain on the offensive” said the young soccer master.

His grandfather George Gariaros came to the United States in 1969 to work at the Hightstown Diner after marrying his grandmother Aglaia. His mother Kathy also worked there and they eventually became the owners.

She met George Antonellos in Greece – they both have roots in Andros – and they decided to live in the United States.

Antonellos’ father came here with \$500 in his pocket and not knowing English. He was so amazed at technology he never



Nikos Antonellos receives the Young Entrepreneur Award from Chairman of the Board and CEO Michael Hadjiloucas of the Greek American Chamber of Commerce at its 2015 gala.

saw on his beautiful Aegean island that he spent in it on a stereo the first day.

What followed, however, was incessant hard work, and that ethic was passed to the next generation.

viding quality products and good service.”

His brother Stefano will be 19 next month who is also excited about college and going into business. “He is the president of the business club at his school,” he said.

Eventually he would like help establish group homes. The challenge for the families once their children grow up is to find a place for them to live. “Down the line I would like to invest in some real estate and create homes for these individuals – with Sidekicks nearby - so they can live a meaningful life.”

Antonellos is very passionate about his work. He dedicates to Sidekicks about seven days a week up to 10 -12 hours a day, but they are not chores. He takes the sacrifices philosophically: “Anything worth doing takes time. You have to be patient.”

**PATIENCE IS ALMOST EVERYTHING**

Patience, he said in closing, is the essence of entrepreneurial success. All the elements can be there, great ideas, a fantastic team, but it does not happen overnight.

“I would say patience is a very underrated characteristic. It is a very undervalued thing to have,” he said. “If you can be patient, everything that you want can be yours.”



Alexandros Poulias, Arturo Gandara, who is a friend of the Poulias Foundation, and Ilias Poulias with children of the Foundation who took part in a race in Guatemala City. Family patriarch George Poulias is an American-educated doctor.

## Poulias Foundation Gives Light to the Children

Continued from page 1

are the Pitsakises from Laconia in plastics, and the Molyviatisses from Mitylene, who own a chain of restaurants.

All of the local Greeks retain a vibrant Hellenic ethnic identity despite that, to date, the community does not have its own church and dedicated Orthodox priest.

The Pouliases are among the most recent arrivals, immigrating to Guatemala about 15 years ago. Family patriarch George is an American-educated doctor and considered a trailblazer in angioplasty in Greece. The patriarch, Maria, after studying in Switzerland, devoted her life to raising their two sons, Ilias and Alexander, who after graduating from Athens College continued their studying abroad in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States.

Ilias earned a master’s degree in engineering from Imperial College in London, and Alexander has degrees in comparative literature from Princeton University and a MBA from Harvard Business School.

After 9/11 and a chain of coincidences, academic research and business ventures brought them to Guatemala.

Alexander and Ilias thought at the time that their stay there would be of a short duration, but this was not to be. After a few months they came to appreciate what the local market offered, grew to love the people, and decided that they would buy out their partner and settle in Guatemala City.

A few years later, they launched a telecommunications business with almost immediate success. This venture, Televida SA, has over 70 employees and operates in 16 Latin American markets as well as in Africa.

**THE POULIAS FOUNDATION**  
About twelve years ago and totally by accident, the Pouliases came in contact with a group of very young children who were using the area in front of the company warehouse as a playground. A precious bond quickly developed between the Imperial- and Harvard-educated executives and the very underprivileged local youth, and this bond created in the Pouliases the desire to help, to somehow contribute toward a better future for these poverty-stricken chil-



Alexandros Poulias with some of the children who have benefited from the Foundation.



The Foundation stresses education. Eduardo and Valery celebrate the awards they received as the trimester’s superstars.

dren  
The Pouliases came to appreciate that their contribution would be much more productive if they would identify gifted children in the poorest neighborhoods of Guatemala City and use them as influential leaders in their own schools and local society. In due course, these kids would hopefully act as role models and become leaders in their communities. That is a concept similar to that which some companies use both in Europe and in the United States, but is something groundbreaking with regard to the poverty and illiteracy of Guatemala City.

The Pouliases decided to offer these children free educational support between ages 4 and 18,

complementary to their public school education. They provided free lunch and dinner for them as well.

The brothers’ dream evolved into what is today the Poulias Foundation.

The Foundation adopts a holistic approach to the development of each child’s personality. Emotional intelligence, self-confidence, basic human values, a clear, analytical process of thought and judgement, foreign languages, the use of technology and programming, sports, music, and many other forms of art (theater, poetry, sculpture, painting history of art, and cinema).

As future leaders, the children are trained to possess all the attributes that will allow them to

grow to the limit of their abilities and their natural gifts, and to guide their less fortunate counterparts to a brighter future by their own example.

The Poulias Foundation also covers all its children’s medical expenses.

Within the span of a very few years, the Foundation has continued to grow and today, in addition to the one in Guatemala City, a second branch exists in the city of Panajachel, and there are plans for two more.

The Poulias Foundation works with a number of international organizations, including the International Education Funders Group (IEFG) and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).

Unlike some other organizations of its kind, the Poulias Foundation is completely funded by the two brothers.

The Foundation has lifted 55 exceptional children by giving them the light – fos of knowledge, and they, in turn, can enlighten others.

They are taught the true essence of humanity, of kindness, and the value of education. Of spiritual growth, and the pride of belonging to a society of values.

The Poulias Brothers, in establishing the Foundation that bears their name, have shared with the children of Guatemala City the values by which they were raised in their own Hellenic home.

## With Ph.D. and Her Gifts, Constantina Rhodes Shows Power of Positive Intuition

Continued from page 1

spent two years in Delhi, India, studying Sanskrit. I had started doing meditation. It opens you up and opens up your intuition. In Florida, I met different people who were teaching how to develop intuition incrementally, and how to do exercises connected with spirituality. I found it fascinating and started doing them.

One of my teachers was a Greek woman. I said: ‘We’re allowed to do this?’ It became part of my personal practice. I also found that I was very good at it. I saw it as really gratifying and a way of helping people.”

Constantina brings intense concentration to her readings. “After a reading, I feel really elated, and the more open a person is, and if we’re really flowing, the more beautiful it is. It’s like going to this sacred space. It takes a lot of energy, and it makes me very hungry, and very tired afterwards. If a person comes for an hour reading, I might spend a half hour before praying and meditating, and a half hour afterwards sleeping and reading. The most I like to do a day is three readings.

“I do most of my work on the phone. I go into a meditative state. If I do a reading on the phone, I ask people to send me their questions the night before. I pray and meditate the night before. I print the questions out, and use that as an anchor, so then when we get on the phone, the energy comes through their voice. Some people like to be there physically. When I read in person, in addition to the questions, I like to hold an object of theirs. Metal is the best because it conducts electric energy and carries information about what’s going on with the individual.”

She discourages her clients from becoming consultation addicts. “My personal intention when I do a reading for someone is to make them feel good about their life, to empower them, so they can move on to wherever they need to go. I have strong guidelines. I never drop gloom and doom on people. My readings are an hour long. Maybe we’ll meet two or three times. But other than once or twice a year, you don’t really need more than that.”

Constantina comes down hard on what she terms “side-walk psychics. There are some really bad people out there. They will lure you in and then escalate the price and it’s very bad news. I don’t operate like that.”

She grew up in Cherry Hill, NJ, the eldest of four youngsters of Peter and Mary Rhodes. Both of her parents were born in the USA, and were introduced by Archbishop Iakovos, when he was a priest at the Boston Cathedral.

Her father, a Harvard graduate and electrical engineer, had a job that moved them throughout the country. When Constantina was born, they returned to Boston so that Iakovos could baptize her.

She earned an undergraduate degree at Rutgers University, and a Ph.D. at Columbia University.

A deeply committed Greek Orthodox, she points out that her mother and father, with a

few other people, founded St. Thomas Church in Cherry Hill. “My mother got out the phone book and called everyone with a Greek name.” Her grandparents were from Crete and Arcadia in the Peloponnese. Her grandfather shortened their name from Rhodopoulos to Rhodes.

Some of her most profound intuitive and spiritual experiences were in Greece, including at the monastery in Aegina while studying at Duree College.

“To me, intuition has always been involved with a spiritual experience, connecting to God.”



A gifted intuitive, Constantina Rhodes helps others develop their own powers of intuition and advises them in private readings.

At age 15, while a camper at Ionian Village, she had “an extraordinary experience going to Delphi. I didn’t know much about Delphi, but something was churning in me. There was something so powerful in this place. It was years later that I found out about the Pythia, the famous Oracle at Delphi, and what she did.

“I teach a whole unit about the Pythia in my class at Hunter. I personally reject the theory that she was intoxicated by drug-like vapors. From what I understand, the whole phenomena of connecting with deities was a very ancient practice. It was a way for them to allow their consciousness to open up and receive information from the gods.”

Divorced now, Constantina is devoted to her young grandsons, ages 3 and 5. She does not own a TV, and to relax enjoys dancing – Greek, folk, and Latin. “I’m so much in my head that it’s good to do something physical.”

Looking to 2016, Constantina weighed in on the New Year.

“It’s getting scary out there. We are being pushed to the tipping point. The spin is so loud! We need to pull inward and get back to basic values. People are reassessing and thinking on their own, starting to tune out the noise.”

Anyone interested in a private reading can consult Constantina’s web site, or email her at nycpythia@aol.com. She will be teaching a course in Intuitive Development at the Open Center starting in February.

## ALL HISTORY

## Artist, Curator, or Theme Park Owner? Spiro Drake's Greek Playland

By Steve Frangos  
TNH Staff Writer

CHICAGO- To be completely honest I have no idea if Spiro Drake is a folk artist, museum curator or theme park owner. He could, in fact, just be a stone worker gone wrong, too. I will leave it up to you to decide. My own interest in the man is how the society around him understands him and identifies him as "The Greek."

Far from a mere roadside attraction, those tales are told in a few paragraphs in fringe books such as *Weird New Jersey* or in a few pictures on *Roadside America's* website, the story of Spiro Drake and his unique "Playland" are the subject of dozens and dozens of newspaper stories, television broadcast reports, Internet accounts and even the object of at least one and perhaps two documentaries. Just to make life interesting few of these reports and descriptive accounts seem to agree with one another. Drawing on as wide a preview of these assorted sources as possible I offer you the following.

Drake's core tale is that he was: "a Depression-era baby abandoned in a coal bin, [raised first at] an orphanage, a vow to spend half of any riches he attained to help the poor. He's fulfilled that vow, giving much of his money away to charity and spending the rest to build Playland and Display World (www.roadsideamerica.com/story/2163)." This unique Playland first opened in 1972. An important point, we need to address immediately is that no collection of sources I've encountered even agrees on the precise name of Drake's outdoor creation. By all accounts, the Playland is a 65 (other sources cite 68, some 87) acre complex directly adjacent to Drake's stone yard supply business, which was known as the Wholesale Nursery. Many accounts and newscasts refer to his creation as the "Greek's Playland, Stone Museum and Clown" while others call the place "The Stone Museum, Display World, and Greek's Playland."

Quickly noted, the "Clown" in question here is none other than "Cyclown," a currently armless work of art. Drake made



this 40 foot wonder himself and claims it is nothing less than the World's Tallest Clown. Cyclown is composed entirely of recycled junk, including a 10,000 gallon oil tank torso and telephone pole legs. Cyclown used to have arms made from irrigation pipe, but an ice storm caused them to snap off. His hat is a huge exhaust hood, with (now) a flashing beacon atop to warn off air traffic. Somehow a lightning rod-type apparatus is also, now, attached to Cyclown since a 1997 fire, caused by lightning destroyed large sections of the Playland.

So what does one find at this unique place: "The entrance to Display World is guarded by 'Monroe the Trackhoe-saurus,' a roaring dinosaur fashioned from gunnite and the body of a heavy construction hoe. It slobbers and drools at the touch of a hidden button. Display World is a pleasant labyrinth of sheltered walkways, waterfalls, lakes, and Japanese-style bridges. Hanging acetylene tank

halves chime like ancient Tibetan bells. The "Great Wall of the Greek" is a mile-long stretch of many small walls constructed from different building materials, meticulously labeled with the names of every marble tile, cinder block, and paved stone (and the price-per-square foot). The Greek [claims] "It's the largest display like this in the world (www.roadsideamerica.com/story/2163)." No one has ever been (or will be) charged admission upon entering Playland. By one estimate, since 1973, the Greek's Playland has already hosted well over 100,000 underprivileged and handicapped children and adults. Over 800 free tours have been conducted at The Stone Museum, alone. No fees or donations of any kind have ever been accepted from visitors. The location for this park is 608 Spotswood-English-



town Road in Jamesburg, New Jersey. The complex is open to the general public Monday through Saturday 8AM-4PM, Sunday 10AM-4PM (call 732-521-2232 to verify).

The Greek's Playland, Inc. is a nonprofit organization (#226-289-923/000) with no paid employees, its Board of Directors, are all volunteers with Spiro Drake, as president. Drake has also been the sole financier of Greeks' Playland, Inc. for 50 years. In August 2013, Drake closed his Wholesale Nursery. Then, in his 80s, Drake could simply no longer conduct this business. Given that this would mean the end of any financial support from the nursery/landscaping business such a decision

do not make that critical link between Drake's long career as (what one sees in print) a "Zen landscaper," "a philosopher in stone" or "sculptor of celebrity pools" also the gifted creator of The Greek's Playland. With the profits from these creations Drake built, over a period of 50 years, Playland.

But Drake is no fool. He could not continue in this line of strenuous work forever. So he built Garden Falls immediately adjacent to the Playland. Garden Falls is a place to have weddings that would financially maintain the Playland. Garden Falls has 4 Banquet Halls which are used for weddings and other special events.

Drake's thinking was "As long as there are weddings Garden Falls will be able to continue funding Greek's Playland and The Stone Museum. The price (of each wedding) includes the room rental, large barrier free restrooms with attendants, trash containers, tables & chairs, 400 backdrop barrier free parking spaces for cars and vans and a stone parking lot for 300 cars and buses (all on site). Also a heliport, a large undercover barrier free playground, 10 waterfalls, 2 lakes, 4 bridges, etc., a great place for photos. Catering is not included. All catering, decorating, DJ, event planners, helicopter & limo services, etc., are done by offsite vendors. Vendors are welcome to visit and use the facility. We do not charge them anything, all they have to do is do a good job, if not - they can never come back (www.gardenfalls.com)." Garden Falls gives 10% of all rentals to Greek's Playland and does all of the maintenance.

As one ages, questions arise—"how did I spend my life?" "Did I give back more than I was given?" "Or was I a fool who played about life's edges rather than engaging in it for all that I could?" Spiro "The Greek" Drake has clearly created a wonderland for the meek of the earth. Can you even imagine a more wonderful way to have spent your life's work?

For fifty years, Spiro Drake was never simply a stone mason or seller of garden goods he was a landscape artist of stunning abilities. Across three states Drake created vast landscapes of stones, trees, bridges, built lakes and pools, buildings of many parts and visions-- all as part of his re-imagining of nature's wonderment. True, a handful of published accounts discuss Drake's work for specific celebrities such as Jon Bon Jovi (e.g. Bongiovi, b. 1962) and/or Bruce Springsteen (b. 1949). But they

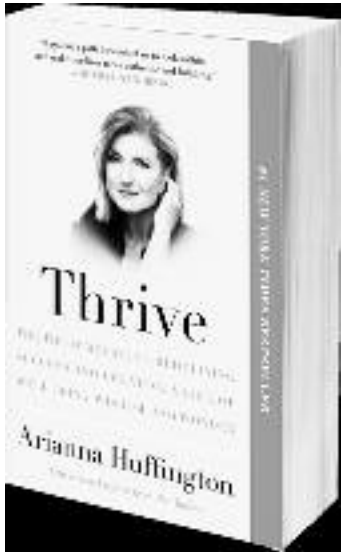
hellenenow1@yahoo.com

## Ten Books Ideally Suited for Greek-American Bibliophiles

Continued from page 1

tasy and immorality as they dive into other people's lives during a summer of lust, drugs, and escapism in Dean Bakopoulos' humorous novel *Summerlong* (HarperCollins).

**For the type-A personality:** Arianna Huffington's bestselling *Thrive: The Third Metric to Re-*



defining Success and Creating a Life of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Wonder (Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony), about the media mogul's hard-won lesson on balance, is now in paperback.

**For the sleuth:** Famed crime-fiction writer George Pelecanos debuts his first collection of short stories, *The Martini Shot: A Novella and Stories* (Little, Brown and Company). In the title novella, a writer discovers the reality behind a television police show.

**For the historical-fiction fan:** The fate of the United States will be determined by new technologies in Peter G. Tsouras' riveting reimagining of the winter of 1863, *Bayonets, Balloons & Ironclads: Britain and France Take Sides with the South* (Skyhorse Publishing).

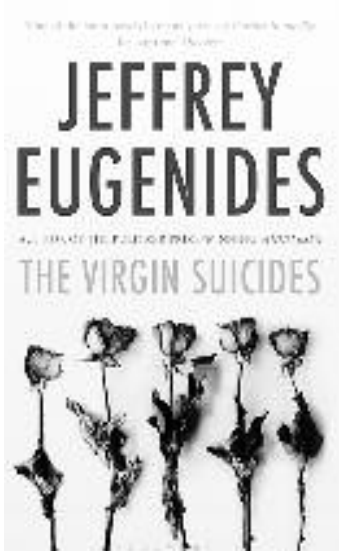
**For the person who likes a political thriller:** U.S. President Charlotte Kramer thought it would be a routine day when she permits camera crews to document her and her staff—but then terrorist attacks break out across the country. Secrets emerge in *Madam President* (Atria/Emily Bestler Books),

written by former White House Communications Director Nicholle Wallace.

**For the outsider lost in a crowd:** Dean Kostos, editor of *Pomegranate Seeds: An Anthology of Greek-American Poetry*, explores New York's "Other"—the disenfranchised, the censored, the immigrant—in his new surrealist poetry book *This Is Not a Skyscraper* (Red Hen Press).

**For the dramatist who likes absurd dark comedy:** Critically acclaimed writer Peter Carlaftes pushes drama to its next level with *Teatroph: Three More Plays* (Three Rooms Press), a trio that deals in the intense subject matter of government surveillance, psychosexual relationships, and vacillating sexual orientation.

**For the modern classicist:** Jeffrey Eugenides' 1993 novel *The Virgin Suicides* about the five Lisbon sisters who commit suicide one by one over the course of a year was republished this year as a Picador Modern Classic.



**For the family genealogist:** Eighteen years after orphaned sisters survive the slums of Athens during the 1922 Greco-Turkish War, one leaves the other behind for the hope of a new life in America. Years later, a third-generation Greek American seeks the truth of his family history in *Fotini Tsalikoglou's* English-language debut *The Secret Sister* (Europa Editions).

By Eleni Sakellis

Books make wonderful gifts this holiday season for all ages. Young readers will especially appreciate the gift of a book they can cherish throughout the years. Here are a few more titles to share with book lovers this Christmas.

**Can We Sing Them? Na Ta Poume** by Kikis Kapsaski is a wonderful book and CD set. With 28 traditional Christmas and New Year's carols this book makes an excellent gift to entertain the entire family. The songs on the CD are sung by a Greek children's choir. The book and CD set is available online.

**The Lucky Cake** by Anna Prokos and illustrated by Christina Tsevis is a delightful children's book explaining the tradition of the Vasilopita for young readers. Charming illustrations highlight the story of a family enjoying Yiayia's delicious cake while learning about the meaning of the tradition. The book is available in a Greek edition as well.

**Ta Christougenna tou Pastelaki**, or Christmas with Pastelaki, by Lina Giannos and illus-



trated by Alexandros Laios, is a fanciful tale featuring a journey to Bethlehem with the Little Drummer Boy. The book includes the lyrics to Greek Christmas carols for the whole family to enjoy.

Also by Lina Giannos and illustrated by Alexandros Laios, *Mathaino tin Alphavita me ton Pastelaki* or I Learn the Alphabet with Pastelaki is another educational and entertaining children's book. The character of Pastelaki returns to help young readers with the Greek alphabet. Part of the children's book series *O Pastelakis o Kollitos Sou*, the

books make a great gift set for young readers.

The wonderful children's book series *Loukoumi* by Nick Katsoris is an endearing gift option that will not only enchant



young readers, but also gives back. Written in English, the books follow the little lamb named Loukoumi on various adventures with her friends including *Fistiki the cat* and *Dean the dog*. The CD narrations of the books feature celebrities including *Olympia Dukakis*, *Jennifer Aniston* and her father *John Aniston* of *Days of Our Lives*

fame. A portion of the sale of the *Loukoumi* books is donated to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

*Loukoumi's Celebrity Cookbook*, also by Katsoris, presents favorite recipes from celebrities. Among the contributors, *Ernie Anastos*, *Melina Kanakaredes*, *George Stephanopoulos*, *Betty White*, and *Oprah Winfrey*. Winner of the *Gourmand World Cookbook Award*, the book was first published in 2011 and a portion from the sale of each book is donated to charity.

The Bible is one of those books we may or may not have on our shelf but have probably not read consistently throughout our lives. The end of the year and the start of a new one is an excellent time to remember the true meaning of Christmas by reading the Gospel. If concerns about understanding the language of the Bible have kept you from reading the Good Book on your own, there are new translations available in all languages and even versions for young readers to understand. A *Daily Readings* app is also available on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website [goarch.org](http://goarch.org).



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**Extending our warm wishes to  
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**Merry Christmas**

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