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● Greek-Canadian folk musician Pavlo crosses the border

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6

From The Editor
The Sun also rises



10

Shaping the Sounds of Television and Film:
Alexandra Patsavas



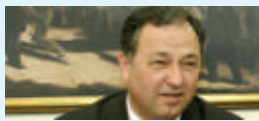
12

Jane Mitakides for
"an America of opportunity and optimism"



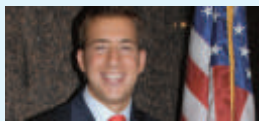
14

Dean Skelos NY Senate Majority Leader



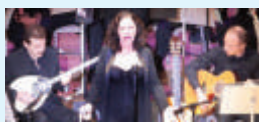
15

Meet congressional hopeful Jim Trakas



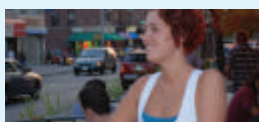
18

New Greek food products knocking at the US door



20

Alexi Giannoulias' only promise:
"To make us all proud, all the time"



22

Pops goes hellenic



26

Summer is here



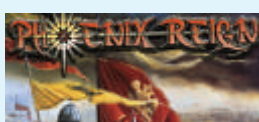
28

A Greek introduces EU to American students



30

Gus Bilirakis in Brooklyn



32

Greek-Canadian folk musician Pavlo crosses the
border for a PBS Special and USA - Canadian Tour



34

Heavy Metal under... heavy rain!



36

Growing Up With Loukomi children's book author
grants contest winners three dream days

38

A RARE View of Young Professionals!

EVENTS

www.lafgrill.com

Lafayette Grill & Bar

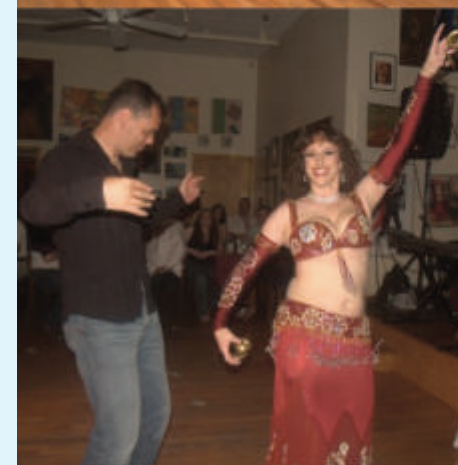
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THE SUN ALSO RISES

The sun is rising on a new generation of political leaders in America and the list is growing in the Greek American community in particular. Alexi Giannoulias of Illinois is a prime example of a young man with a promising career in private life (banking) but who instead decided to "bank" his future in public service.

"I think getting people in office who are not only Greek-Americans, but qualified, capable, intelligent, passionate Greek leaders, is extremely important," says Giannoulias, the Illinois state treasurer and youngest elected in U.S. history. "I also think if they see someone who's young, with energy and enthusiasm, really excited about public service, they might get excited too."

Gus Bilirakis from Florida has his father Mike's example. The elder Bilirakis was a mainstay of the Florida congressional delegation and Gus honed his own political skills in his father's campaigns—in fact, he was the one who convinced his father to run for public office. "I was 18 years old and in high school when I encouraged him to run for Congress; it was an open congressional seat," says Gus. "We had these testing-the-waters meetings and he didn't plan to run, it just happened."

Florida is a hotbed of political activity lately, with Governor Charlie Crist being mentioned prominently as a John McCain running mate. "Charlie would give Elvis a run for his money," said Ken Pruitt, the Republican leader in the Florida state Senate. "That's how popular he is in Florida. If McCain wants to win this state in November, Charlie Crist is a no-brainer [as running mate]."

Another political hotbed is Ohio, which has a sitting representative in Zach Space and two more making their bid: Jane Mitakides from Dayton and Jim Trakas from Cleveland. "I am running for Congress because I believe it is a time for leadership focused on an America of opportunity and optimism," says Mitakides, expressing the aspirations that in fact brought many immigrants to America. And Jim Trakas has a compelling argument for a Greek American being elected: "As a Greek American, I have chosen to run for Congress with the wisdom that those who invented our democracy can help perfect it."

And out west in Nevada there is the eternally-feisty Dina Titus, the state senate minority leader and a political science professor, who lost her bid to become governor but is now running for a House seat on a typically independent platform: "I am running for Congress because I believe the people in CD3 need and deserve a champion for their interests, not a pawn of the special interests. The first time I ran for office, I said, 'I think for myself and nobody owns me.' It was true then; it was true throughout my years in the State Senate; it is true now; and it will be true when I'm in Congress."

Out west there is also Mike Angelides—Wait a second, is he running for something again?—Not right now, but with Schwarzenegger's numbers tanking again can Angelides be quiet for very long?

Dimitri C. Michalakis

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Shaping the Sounds of Television and Film: Alexandra Patsavas

*If television and film
have become ways that people find music,
then Alexandra Patsavas is one of the guides*

by Kaymaria Daskarolis

Owner of Chop Shop Music Supervision and Chop Shop Records, Alexandra Patsavas is one of the key players determining what we hear when we watch television or go to the movies. The granddaughter of Greek immigrants and the daughter of lifelong educators, Patsavas is pioneering new territory in the music industry while educating viewers and listeners worldwide. Along with her team of musical coordinators at Chop Shop Music Supervision, Patsavas delivers the signature sounds of many films and television shows. Through her new label, Chop Shop Records, Patsavas is expanding her reach.

How did you decide to become a business owner yourself?

I never set out to own my own business. I set out to work in the music industry. I started at the university and then actually had my own small business very early on booking shows and talent for the university. I went on to work with a number of big companies: Triad Artists, which became part of William Morris; Roger Corman's company Concorde Films; and then BMI. Finally I started my own company about 10 years ago, in January 1998. I started my own company because I felt like it was one of the few ways I could control what I worked on. But I interact with many big companies and now I have a joint venture with Atlantic Records.

Why did you choose Atlantic?

I felt like they were very open to what I wanted to do. They are really fantastic at artist development, as well as working a band once they're signed.

Is Chop Shop Records focusing on a particular genre of music?

We do focus on indie rock. Certainly you can find me on my MySpace page for submissions (www.myspace.com/chopshoprecordlabel). I don't see branching out of my comfort zone too much.

When it comes to actual music supervision as opposed to the record label, how do you feel about branching out of your comfort zone?

I enjoy that. I enjoy the music challenges of a different musical era. *Mad Men* takes place in 1961-1962 New York. *Carnivale* took place in 1934. I've done period movies, I've done movies that focus on country music, we've done episodes based on classical music or ballet music, . . . that's what makes this job so interesting. It's the constant challenge of a hip-hop episode, of a historical episode. It's a different scenario than a label.

Would you say this is your dream job right now?

I couldn't imagine a better job than the one that I have.

What does your job as music supervisor actually entail?

The music supervisor is hired by the director of a film or the executive producers of a

television show to shape the signature sound of the music of the project. That can include the theme song, any song that's sung on camera, the soundtrack that accompanies the project, the songs that are used within the body of the episodes or films, . . . it's really anything that has to do with music.

What do you like most about your job?

I enjoy the incredible intelligence and creativity of the people I get to interact with. That's what makes this job so satisfying. And I have always had such a strong affinity for music. This is a way I can not only focus on brand-new artists, unsigned artists, and little-known artists, but also classics from this century and the last.

What are some of the biggest challenges of your work?

Timeframes can be very challenging, especially as we move on later into a television season. The schedule from when the episodes are actually shot until when they air is more compressed. We definitely have to hustle in order to get everything not only approved creatively but cleared legally for air, and that's challenging. The creative process is challenging in general. Sometimes it takes a little while to find the perfect music for something.

How is the experience different when you are supervising the music for a show like *Without A Trace* where the music is setting the tone and the mood as opposed to a show like *Gossip Girl* where it's practically another character on the show?

It's really about the executive producers' expectations for what the music is going to mean. I think when music is a character we certainly focus a lot on the music culture surrounding the character. On *Gossip Girl* I do a video blog, we have character playlists – we create an interactive way for the fans to become interested and part of the music culture of the show.

Your job sounds really glamorous. Is it as glamorous as it sounds?

No. (laughs) There are certainly very glamorous things about it. But mostly I am in my office with my headphones on or on the phone. I keep very regular hours and then

more hours on top of those regular hours.

Like your participation in the Tribeca Film Festival?

Right. Which was so fun. It's always something I look forward to doing. This year I announced one of my bands, The Republic Tigers, who released the first album on my new label. I also got to curate some music for the Tribeca Film Festival. We tried to focus a bit on New York music with The Hold Steady and The Virgins, which I've used quite a bit on *Gossip Girl*.

The Bad Veins, the fourth band you featured, won the Target Music Maker Award. Target generously gave a \$10,000 unrestricted cash prize that the band can use in any way they want. It's really fantastic to be able to do things like that.

Listeners in Greece and other countries where shows like *The O.C.* are syndicated are being introduced to music they've never heard before because of you and your team. How does that feel?

It's fantastic. How rewarding is that? That we're making an impact. That is super rewarding. I would love very much to go to a conference in Greece sometime. I'm sure there's a music business conference that takes place in Athens. I get a lot of e-mail from Greece, actually.

How did you feel when you learned you had been nominated for a Grammy?

What better honor than to be honored by your peers? The Grammy committee is made up of our peers so it was very exciting – especially for a television soundtrack, which almost never gets nominated.

When did you first feel like you got to a place where you could call your own shots?

In the beginning, when I first started music supervising, bands were much less apt to feel like it was a good idea to allow their music to be used in a film or television show. They were not so into the idea of marrying their piece of art with a picture. It's gotten much easier over the years. Artists are into the opportunity now, and that's changed everything more than anything else.

Jane Mitakides for "an America of opportunity and optimism"



A native Daytonian with a background in strategic communications and investor relations, Jane Mitakides understands the importance of a sound economic policy, fair trade agreements and policies that will bring encourage business growth and add jobs to our community. As founder of Ohio-based Helsey Advertising, she has worked with businesses all over America, gaining an in-depth knowledge of business and investor relations that will serve our region well. Awards for her work include prestigious ANDY, ADDY and CLIO. "I am running for Congress because I believe it is time for leadership focused on an America of opportunity and optimism, beginning with an economy that works for both families and business," she stated for NEO. "We have it within our power to make health care affordable, accessible and reliable; and to increase investments in infrastructure, energy independence, and education."

Jane Mitakides has served on a diverse variety of boards and organizations including the Development Board of St. Elizabeth Hospital, Women in Leadership, the Political Action Committee of the NAACP, and the various arts.

She also brings 20 years of political and campaign experience to her role as candidate for OH-3. She is a founding member of both the Women's Council of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and The Small Business Council of the Democratic National Committee. Jane is also active with organizations focused on issues of interest to Greek Americans, and was recently honored by PSEKA, the International Coordinating Committee for Justice for Cyprus. "In Ohio, we are staggering under the burden of jobs loss, housing foreclosures and failed leadership. But I believe this is a once-in-a-generation election, an election that can be a turning point for America. I believe we can make real change, and do it sooner, rather than later."

According to Jane Mitakides, "it is time to put the partisanship of the past few years behind us, and work toward long-term solutions to the challenges facing America here and abroad. We must return America to its role as a world leader in education, innovation and international understanding."

"As a local businesswoman, Jane understands what it takes to bring good jobs to our community and strengthen the middle class. In Congress, she will bring people together to get the job done for our families on issues such as healthcare, the environment, and education," said Ohio Governor Ted Strickland.

Married for 26 years to John Mitakides, a dentist who has practiced in the Dayton area for over 30 years, Jane is also the very proud mother of two children: Katie, who is completing her PhD in International Relations, and Andrew, a recent graduate of Hampden-Sydney College.



Jane with husband John Mitakides and children Katie and Andrew.

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Dean Skelos NY Senate Majority Leader

Greek-American State Senator Dean Skelos (R-Rockville Centre) was elected Senate majority leader late last June, entrusted with preserving his party's slim hold on its only power base in state government. He succeeded Joseph Bruno, 79, who announced he would not seek re-election this fall to the seat he's held since 1976. Skelos, 60, was crucial to Bruno becoming majority leader in 1994. Speaking after being sworn in he listed his top priorities as property tax relief and job creation.

Dean Skelos has been in the Senate since 1985 and is steeped in the ways of power Albany, including the authority of strong majority leaders to determine what bills even get to the floor for debate. Born and raised in Rockville Centre, a member of South Side High School's class of 1966, he received a B.A. in History from Maryland's Washington College in 1970. He earned a law degree in 1975 from the Fordham University School of Law and is counsel to the Mineola-based law firm Ruskin Moscou Evans & Faltischek.

Serving in the state Assembly for two years, Skelos was elected to the state Senate in 1984. He is the author of Megan's law, which created the New York state Sex Offender Registry, and serves as the senate representative on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's four-member Capital Program Review Board, and co-

chairman of the legislative task force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment.

Building upon his record of combating fraud and abuse in government, Senator Skelos negotiated an agreement ensuring that school district lawyers who are ineligible for public pensions cannot access the state's public retirement system, making school districts' administrative costs more transparent and establishing new safeguards to end school superintendent 'double-dipping' practices that have cost property taxpayers millions of dollars.

NY Senator Majority Leader Dean Skelos with New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg



Senator Skelos also wrote the law eliminating the unfair New York City "Commuter Tax" and, during his tenure as the Senate Aging Committee Chairman, the law creating the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage ("EPIC") program.

As the Chairman of the Senate's NextGen Task Force, Skelos wrote a comprehensive plan that resulted in the enactment of various tax credits and other incentives designed to promote the creation of high-paying jobs in the fields of high-technology and biotechnology. Moreover, he developed the landmark HELP program and passed the Long Island Workforce Housing Act to make homeownership more affordable for Long Islanders, the New York State Center for Excellence and Innovation in Homeland Security and, in 2002, the \$71.5 million Long Island Biotech Investment and Job Creation Program.

"I am truly honored by my election as leader of the Senate Republican Conference and as Majority Leader of the New York State Senate. It is a privilege to be chosen for this new challenge and opportunity to serve the people of this great State," he said after the sworn-in-ceremony. "All of us owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for the leadership and service of Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno. He led our conference and the State Senate for 14 years and distinguished himself as one of the greatest leaders in the history of the State."

He also expressed his commitment "to working with Governor David Paterson and we welcome his efforts to work with us on these and other priority issues. We also look forward to working in a bipartisan spirit with Assembly Speaker Silver and leaders Malcolm Smith and Jim Tedisco, to achieve our common goals."



Jim Trakas takes a look at the big picture - Greater Cleveland is in need of new leadership.



Jim hammers home the idea that he will work to revitalize Greater Cleveland's economy, to empower families and strengthen America.



With Jim on the campaign trail, things are looking up for Greater Cleveland!

Meet congressional hopeful Jim Trakas

Second generation Greek American Jim Trakas (R-OH 10th District) is running for Congress this coming November along with Jane Mitakides (D-OH 3rd District) and Dina Titus (D-NV 3rd District). The 10th Congressional District is in northeast Ohio and contains part of the city of Cleveland. It encompasses the western and southern portion of Cuyahoga County. In the March 4th primary election, he won the Republican primary by getting 79.31% of the vote!

"As a Greek American, I have chosen to run for Congress with the wisdom that those who invented our democracy, can help perfect it," he stated for NEO. "It is my duty to go to Washington for the betterment of my constituents and to de-emphasize politics, and solve very real problems, many of them created by Washington. As an Orthodox Christian, I plan to govern in a moral and effective manner that will bring pride to my constituents and rich cultural heritage."

Former Ohio State Representative Jim Trakas has deep roots in Greater Cleveland's Greek community. His maternal grandparents hail from Platanos, Samos, Greece. His paternal grandparents come from Roino, Arcadia. His grandparents all came to the USA from 1920-1921. Vasilios Trakas fought for seven years in the Balkan Wars and WWI in the Greek Army as an infantryman and won the regimental dance contest in 1916 as a machine gunner. A member of St. Paul Greek Orthodox

Church in North Royalton, Ohio, Jim was elevated as a Reader of The Holy Orthodox Church by His Grace Gerasimos, Bishop of Adydos at Pittsburgh. He was an altar boy for nearly ten years and was captain of the altar boys for five years at St. Paul.

A member of the John M. Manos Cleveland Chapter of the Order of AHEPA, Trakas has won the Periclean of the Year Award as well as the Socratan of the Year Award at his local chapter. He is also a member of The American Hellenic Institute and contributes to IOCC in the Cleveland Area. He has been recognized for his leadership by American Hellenic Institute and United Hellenic Organizations.

As a legislator, he has twice been Grand Marshall in the Cleveland Greek Independence Day Parade, and has helped to commemorate the holiday by sponsoring resolutions in The Ohio House of Representatives, where he was a Member from 1999-2006. Jim also passed resolutions through the Legislature encouraging the U.S. Department of State to include Greece in the Visa Waiver Program, as well as encouraging the U.S. Department of State to not recognize FYROM with a traditional Greek name as wrong diplomacy for the U.S. Trakas also has co-sponsored legislation to recognize the Armenian Holocaust and called on the Turkish Government to apologize to the Armenian people. He was instrumental in working to install a bust of Clisthenes in The Ohio House Chamber and help educate

Ohioans on the role that the Greeks played in establishing the democratic-republican ideas.

Trakas was married at The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Columbus Ohio to Anne Kennedy Trakas. They live in Independence, Ohio and carry on the traditions of Greek American families. Jim is active in cultural and art organizations that glorify Greek culture and has spoken out about the continued Turkish Occupation of Cyprus as a public figure. As a member of the American Nationalities Movement he has championed freedom's causes around the world, and has won that organization's Man of The Year Award for his commitment to the Greek community.

Contribution checks should be made to the order of Trakas for Congress and mailed to: 1500 West 3rd Street, Suite 120, Cleveland, OH 44113. For on-line contributions go to <http://www.jimtrakas.org/contribute.php>.

The maximum contribution for an individual is \$2,300 for the primary election which was held on March 4, 2008, and another \$2,300 for the general election on November 4, 2008.



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New Greek food products knocking at the US door

Greek Deputy Minister of Rural
Development and Food Kostas Kiltidis.



Greek agricultural products are well placed to conquer the European and international markets, according to Deputy Minister of Rural Development and Food of Greece Kostas Kiltidis, who himself belongs to a new breed of leadership, willing to make bold moves and take risks in order to open doors and ways. "Our aim is to bring out all those relative advantages of our agriculture in order for our products to gain the position they deserve," he says. "The basic aim of the ministry is for our country to obtain a strong and competitive edge in the agriculture-livestock sector, with

main advantage points the exceptional quality and the safety for the consumer that our products are already famous for." Important assurances as the outcry over damaged Chinese goods, and recently the salmonella-infected tomatoes are yet to subside, leaving American consumers as preoccupied as ever. In the meantime, the buzz over the so-called Mediterranean diet – different Mediterranean versions of Greek cuisine basically – is constantly on the rise, thanks not only to taste but to health benefits as well, leaving the space wide open for high quality, naturally produced Greek goodies. Kostas Kiltidis' interview with NEO was done in the wake of his recent visit to the US, where he had the opportunity to hold a series of meeting with key American officials, among them Deputy Minister of Agriculture Mark Keenum, and people from the industry.

During your recent visit to the US, you said that the American market is in demand of more high quality Greek products, including and besides the staple olive oil, wine and cheese.

Besides these particularly Greek agricultural products, we are promoting and simultaneously demonstrating a series of other products in the U.S market, as derivatives by the processing of the organic products as well as products of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). So, we target this new sector emerging in the U.S market, where Greek products of organic and alternative crops (aromatic products, crocus of Kozani, truffles, chestnuts, pomegranate etc.) can certainly find their place.

In which ways will you support the production of these organic products?

Greece is following the common European orientation and within this framework there is an incentive of subsidies for the production of the organic products aiming at the infrastructure enforcement for their long term produce and disposal in the market.

I would like to point that, during my recent visit to the U.S., as you previously mentioned, I had the opportunity to ascertain that the respective subsidies' strategy is compatible with U.S practices. We take advantage of every possibility, by participating to the international exhibitions, exchanging views with colleagues, inviting to Greece representatives of other countries and always with the contribution of the competent inter-professional organizations as well as the

By Konstantinos Rhompotis



Deputy Minister
Kostas Kiltidis
with Prime Minister
Kostas Karamanlis.



producers, processors and exporters representatives, to make our products the best in the world.

Is production capable of proving a steady supply to the US market without altering the quality?

We believe, as I said before, that the Greek agriculture is competitive, provides significant comparative advantages and has a future. All we need is to demonstrate the higher quality of the Greek agricultural products in comparison to those of other countries, especially the ones in our neighborhood.

Finally, we must show off those special quality characteristics and point out the importance of the Mediterranean diet, in order to conquer the U.S market. Already, in large international markets such as China, Japan, Australia, Canada, Russia and almost in all EU countries, we have succeeded in doing that. We have established transparency in the production stage (pesticides, fertilizers etc.) and traceability (control in every production and processing stage).

After the meeting you held in the US, are you more optimistic about opening this market to Greek products, a goal of many of your predecessors as well.

Certainly. The Greek agricultural products as the olive oil and the olives, the wine and the cheeses (mainly feta) present a continuous penetration and an upward trend to the international markets and especially in the U.S, not because over three millions Greeks live and work there, but due to the

comparative advantages our products have in comparison to those of other countries. Also I would like to mention the rapid increase of organic products' demand as well as of products of highly dietary value. The latter was pointed out during my visit by the US Deputy Minister of Agriculture Mark Keenum. So, the products' promotion is more intensive in the U.S market and with joint efforts and initiatives we will succeed.

Has the weak dollar affected the competitiveness of the Greek products in the U.S market?

I think that in spite of the adverse world economic conjuncture, our country has not been affected that much.

How can the American, and especially the Greek-American community, help in the rural development of Greece, especially after last year's disastrous wildfires?

Before I answer your question, allow me to say a few words about the catastrophic fires as well as about the actions taken by the Ministry of Rural Development and Food. The reconstruction of the areas hit by the catastrophic fires in 2007 is a huge challenge for us. We proceed based on plans and we are attempting step by step the regeneration of the burned areas of our country. We are implementing the reconstruction of the rural and forestry areas, taking specific actions. Within this framework I would like to point out that we activated the Special Forestry Agency financing the forestry interventions. We also proceeded to the immediate drawing of the forest maps giving priority to the areas

of Attica and Halkidiki. During my meeting with the US Director of the Forestry Service Tom Harbor, who is in charge of wildfires and aerial fire extinction, we exchanged views on the structure and function of forest services as well as on the mechanisms for fire fighting. In the course of our discussion the need for the re-establishment of the Forest Service came up. In the US, man power is primarily utilized for fire prevention, since technology alone (cameras, detectors etc.) has been proven not effective enough.

The American-Greek community is helping from the beginning in numerous ways. The Foundation Plant your Roots in Greece, for example, is leading the effort for reforestation of the affected areas. The response of the American Hellenes was immediate and touching, reconfirming an affinity that makes us proud for our common ancestry.

How was your meeting with Archbishop Demetrios?

My meeting with Archbishop Demetrios was a special experience for me. His presence can be compared to a beacon of light, not only for the Greek Orthodox people in America, but for all Hellenes. We had the opportunity to discuss in detail the initiatives taken by his Office in order to alleviate the suffering of the people in the areas affected mostly by the wildfires. I would like to thank once again the Americans of Greek descent, all the Greeks living abroad, all those who contributed in the healing of wounds caused by this nightmare.



Alexi Giannoulias with mom Anna and brothers Dimitri (left) and George.



Alexi addressing supporters at a recent New York event.



With Senator and Democratic Presidential Nominee Barack Obama at last year's PSEKA conference in Washington DC.



Alexi Giannoulias with friend and advisor Endy Zementides.

When he was elected to office on November 7, 2006, Alexi Giannoulias became at the age of 30 the youngest State Treasurer in U.S. history. But since Illinois' economy is the 7th largest in the U.S. that means he's responsible for investing \$17 billion in taxpayer dollars on a daily basis! Two years later, as the fortunes of his mentor and friend Senator Barack Obama have risen at the White House level, pundits say that the energetic Greek American, who like Obama ran against many odds and won, is very close to becoming the youngest officer in even higher echelons. Some talk about the Senate, others about running for Governor, some even have him getting a position in the Obama administration.

"It's good to be ambitious and want to do more, but I think you need to be focused on what you are doing right now," Alexi said to NEO at a recent fund raising event in New York City, which his mother Anna and brothers Dimitri and George also attended. "My job is to be the best State Treasurer in the country, to help the people of Illinois." He also made clear that his association with Obama is not based on any exchange of services. "I believe in him as individual and I think he will make this country a better place. I've never asked nor would I ask for any special favor."

Alexi Giannoulias grew up in Chicago, attended the University of Chicago, transferred to Boston University, graduated cum laude with a Bachelors degree in economics. He played NCAA Division I level basketball while at Boston University, and was named to the America East Conference Academic Honor Roll each of the two years he played. He then played professional basketball in Greece for a year (Panionios Basketball Team) before enrolling at Tulane University School of Law in New Orleans, earned a law degree, and passed the Illinois Bar exam. Coming out of school, he worked as Vice-President and Senior Loan Officer at Broadway Bank in Chicago, founded by his late father Alekos, where he got part of the real-life experience required for his duties as State Treasurer. He also serves on the board of directors of the Community Banker's Association of Illinois Legislative Committee, the South Side/Wabash YMCA, and the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce. Alexi Giannoulias founded and chairs the AG Foundation, a not-for-profit charity that donates money to treat child-related illnesses, curb poverty and assist disaster relief organizations. The foundation has benefited many charities, including those assisting victims of Hurricane Katrina.



Alexi with NEO's Demetrios Rbompotis

Not only do you represent a new breed of Greek-Americans in politics, you also manage to inspire many even older than you. Do you see this becoming a trend?

I think it's possible. We are excited about it and I think getting people in office who are not only Greek-Americans, but qualified, capable, intelligent, passionate Greek leaders, is extremely important. I also think if they see someone who's young, with energy and enthusiasm, really excited about public service, they might get excited too. So, if one person sees what we have been able to do in Illinois, one Greek kid somewhere gets inspired and we can have a new generation of people in politics. And not only run for office. They can be chief of staff, they can be philanthropists, they can be like Mike Jaharis, they can be like Andy Zemenides who's a successful attorney. Being a leader doesn't necessarily mean you have to be an elected official.

Although there are countless successful Greeks in every field, when it comes to politics it seems they shun the limelight. Why do you think that is?

I don't know, but hopefully that will change. Again, there need to be role models for Greek Americans to follow, to say, you know what, if Alexi can do it I can do it, and I want to run for office, whether it's school board president or governor or mayor. We need a next generation to really get involved, run for office, get engaged in the civic process.

After you got elected, did you witness something like that happening in Illinois?

We've done great. We got a couple of judges hired for whom we are very proud, we got some candidates whom I think in the next couple of years they'll be running for office, we have a Greek chief of staff to the alderman of downtown Chicago, we started to get people more engaged in the process which is really exciting for me.

For the last 7 years we had two Greek-Americans next to President Bush, John Negroponte and Francis Frangos Townsend. Yet even in a minor for the US issue, such as FYROM's name, they didn't matter. Why are Greek Americans in

Alexi Giannoulias' only promise: "To make us all proud, all the time"

By Demetrios Rbompotis

position of power less assertive when it comes to Hellenic issues?

I think we have to get people in office who understand our issues. In Illinois we've done great with every single thing that we requested. They have to understand, to pay attention, to learn about our issues. And I don't think the Greek community asks for any special favors. They just want fairness and they want that all our issues be viewed in a fair and equitable way. If you look at some of them, like the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we are not asking for any special favors, we are asking for respect and understanding of our religion. When you look at the Macedonian issue, we are just asking for respect of our history. We made a lot of concessions in the FYROM issue. Look at Cyprus, we are saying there shouldn't be militarization on the island. Again, we are not asking for anything dramatic, we are asking for the rule of law to be respected.

Is Senator Obama such a leader?

Every time we've asked his help, he has been great, he understands the issues that are important to us and while I can't speak for the Senator nor will I speak for him, I can tell you that he is someone who at every issue he's been willing to learn, to understand what is very important to us as a community.

Your political paths have many similarities and seem to run parallel ways form a point on. Should we expect from you going at least as high as Senator Obama in the near future?

Well, "siga, siga" (one step at the time, in Greek.) I love my job. I'm thirty two years old, the youngest State wide official in the country, and that means a lot to me. It's good to be ambitious and want to do more, but I think you need to be focused on what you are doing right now. My job is to be the best State Treasurer in the country, to help the people of Illinois and in my free time to find ways to help my mentor (Barack Obama) to become president of the United States.

If he becomes president, a very likely possibility at this point, and although, as you said, you have an important job to do, will you consider a cabinet post or his Senate seat if it's offered to you?

We never talked about that with him and I am not helping him because I want something or I expect anything. I'm helping Senator Obama because from the bottom of my heart, I believe in him as a leader, I believe in him as individual and I think he will make this country a better place. I've never asked or would I ask for any special favor. It will be a great day for me, a great day for this country and a great day for everyone around the world

when Barack Obama gets sworn in.

What are the main challenges you are facing as Illinois Treasurer?

We have a structural deficit in Illinois, we are facing a recession, families are really going through tough times, skyrocketing costs of food, fuel and the foreclosure crisis. Ideally we need leaders in office who understand what it means to make difficult financial decisions and I hope that we make some important changes. I hope that at the federal level, Senator Obama will be elected in order to make the changes needed.

If I'd ask you for a message, what would you say to Greek-Americans?

We use the term pride very loosely these days. And I have to tell you that from the bottom of my heart, I'm so proud to be Greek, I'm so proud of my heritage, my language, to be part of the Greek church and when people tell me they are impressed of things that I've accomplished at such a young age, I say that's not impressive. What's impressive is our parents who came to this country, worked hard, taught themselves the language, raised their families, made all the tough decisions and sacrifices, that's impressive. My message is, thanks for everything, I promise I'll make you all very proud, all the time.

Haris Alexiou with her orchestra and the Boston Pops.



Anastasia Malliaras, 15 years old, sings the Greek National Anthem.



Haris Alexiou



Archbishop Demetrios of America with young Peter Sakellaris on stage.



Metropolitan Methodios addresses the audience as Cathy & Peter Sakellaris, Haris Alexiou, Pops Conductor Keith Lockhart and Archbishop Demetrios look on.



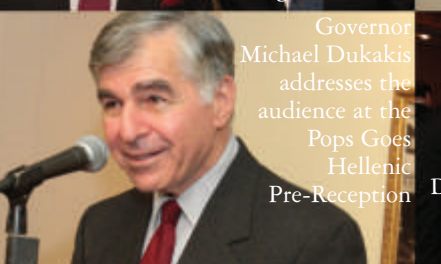
Noted Greek Cookbook Author Diane Kochilas and Christina Pappas, President of Open the Door.



Guiding Light Actor Frank Dicopolous and Senator John Kerry.



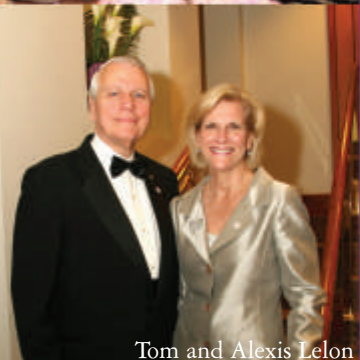
Archdiocesan Council Vice President Michael Jaharis and the event Co-Chair George Sakellaris.



Governor Michael Dukakis addresses the audience at the Pops Goes Hellenic Pre-Reception



Kalliopi Mavroyannis and Nassia Papanicolaou.



Tom and Alexis Lelon



Drew Webb, Actor Frank Dicopolous, Fox News Anchor Maria Stephanos and Co-Host George Sakellaris.

pops goes hellenic

The Boston Pops went Hellenic last June, as the heritage and culture of Greece was celebrated at the city's Symphony Hall with the first concert in recent history that brought together several genres of contemporary Greek music in one event. At one point the entire audience cheered as the orchestra put on their Greek fisherman's caps and Maestro Keith Lockhart amused the audience as he danced to the music. The first half of the Pops Goes Hellenic concert was dedicated to orchestral music by Greek composers. The second half was solely dedicated to international singing sensation Haris Alexiou, who performed with the Boston Pops Orchestra and a smaller group of Greek musicians who played traditional Greek instruments.

Archbishop Demetrios of America and Metropolitan Bishop Methodios of Boston, both Pops fans, as they confessed on stage - the latter a Haris Alexiou fan as well - led the list of countless dignitaries in attendance, with former Massachusetts Governor Mike Dukakis, Senator John Kerry, Congressman John Sarbanes, Archdiocesan Council Vice President Mike Jaharis, Ambassadors Alexandros Mallias, Andreas Kakkouris and Andreas Mavroyannis among others.

Before the concert, Diane Kochilas, one of the world's foremost authorities on Greek cuisine, took part in a special reception featuring gourmet Hellenic cuisine created from her recipes. In addition to celebrating and promoting the preservation of Greek culture, Pops Goes Hellenic served as a fundraising campaign to benefit the capital campaign of the new St. Catherine Greek Orthodox Church, a Byzantine style church, in Braintree, MA. Thanks to the generosity of the sold-out crowd, the event raised approximately \$1.3 million for the church.

The evening, a sold-out success, with more than 2,200 guests from around the world in attendance, was co-chaired by Cathy and George Sakellaris, and produced by Elia, a newly formed group of friends, who are dedicated to preserving and promoting Greek culture by building a stronger Greek-American community committed to working together to benefit a variety of Hellenic causes, creating a philanthropic mindset needed to support our cultural identity for future generations and educating all Americans about the richness of Greek culture.

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summer is here

By Katherine Skaris

Summer is officially here. For others it may just mean good weather, beaches, no school...but to every Greek American it means time for Greece. Not only are we excited for the gorgeous "paralies," but for the food, the people and the overall air of the country that has the ability to attract us every summer. Take note that as I am writing this, sitting in one of Astoria's most popular cafes, Avenue, there are several cell phones going off with Mixali Xatzigianni ringtones....summer is definitely here.

Since as far as I can remember my sister and I have been sent to Greece every summer for a few weeks, if not for the whole three months; sometimes even without our parents. It is obvious that we were primarily sent as a way to practice the Greek language and of course spend time with our grandparents; not that I ever complained, I enjoyed every minute of my vacation. Evidently I am not only talking about myself, but in fact, I'm using my experiences as examples to establish the patterns and habits of the majority of Greek Americans.

I'm sure most have seen the movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," and although it does illuminate several traditions of the Greek culture, it doesn't touch upon the routines of my generation: Greek Americans ages 21-30. Sure we all attend big family get togethers, and celebrate Easter with an "arni" on the spit, but there is far more to that. As Dan Valentino, a student of Italian descent points out "All Greeks are really into their culture, their language and food especially. But most people don't go that extra mile, Greeks do." We attend Greek Schools, we practically live in Astoria's cafes and clubs, and we play and dance to Greek music knowing all the words to every song. But that's not the only thing that separates us from other cultures. Dan Lomeli, states "I have found that most [Greeks] are lively, hearty and fun loving, always willing to incorporate good friends into a family atmosphere. It is this type of unconditional closeness and camaraderie that makes Greek people so much fun to be around and party with because you don't feel like an outsider, or a stranger, or out of place."

From the moment I entered college I have surrounded myself with Greek people. Take note that I am saying college because prior, we were forced to attend Greek Schools and socialize with only Greek kids. Nevertheless, it was easier to associate with those of Greek descent, simply because we had so much in common. We went for coffee together, Greek concerts, and of course mocked our parents' ways and our upbringings; all in good fun of course. We frequented the Greek restaurants of Bayside, namely Gyro Corner and Mythos, as well as

practically lived in the café Oasis; we often played card games, primarily KounKan, and Kseri, all the while sipping on our Frappedes. Those were definitely the days.

After my college years and of course after finally reaching the legal drinking age, we began to extend our hangouts to the Clubs and Cafés of Astoria: Central, Cavo, Plato's, Caprice, Zodiac, as well as Avenue, and Grand. Plato's offers live Greek Music every Friday night, by singers George Koumiotis and Anthi Aggelou; it is the one place that clearly resembles the "bouzoukia" in Greece. George Koumiotis explains that singing at Platos really bears no difference to performing in Greece, "when the crowd relates and sings back, their Greek pride is unleashed, and my energy increases." Central, Cavo, and Caprice are beautiful clubs that play a mix of music, and yet still are dominated by Greek people. "They [clubs] have the perfect party atmospheres." Stavroula Boundouris, speech pathologist states, "Everyone there not only knows each other but knows how to party and have fun in the same manner. It is all about letting down your hair, putting your hands up and dancing as much as you can."

In addition, there are the few Greek cafes on 30th Avenue that seem to always be filled with Greek people. In the summer when everyone is outside, smoking, mouthing along to the Greek music and drinking their coffee, there really is no better way to relax. It is truly amazing to see that Astoria continues to be "the largest community of Greeks outside of Greece," as Zisis Soulantzios, entrepreneur sums it up.

Enough sidetracking, and back to the summer plans. Now every year, from the moment we come back from our vacation in Greece, we begin to plan out next summer; what islands will we visit, how long we are going to stay and so forth. Although now we are no longer sent and paid for by our parents, we still

manage to save up enough money to make it, even if it's only for a few weeks. Simply the thought of staying in New York for the summer in its entirety is too depressing to bear, and it is a very rare occasion for a Greek to not go. We need the crystal clear waters, the "souvlakia" and "loukoumades," and especially our relatives. Then again, it's not only about the "bouzoukia," the food and the beaches, but our overall embracing of our culture. The steps to all the traditional dances will remain embedded in our minds, the Greek sayings forever rolling off our tongues, and the Greek Music continuously sung.



PHOTO: ETA PRESS

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Mr. Pangratis with the organizers of the event



A Greek introduces EU to American students



Mr. Pangratis speaking at the event

By Pete Chatziplis

It may be known to many that a Greek, Dr. Angelos Pangratis, is currently the Deputy Ambassador of the European Union in America. Based in Washington D.C., he serves as the Minister and Deputy Head of the European Commission Delegation to the US. As part of the delegation's activities in raising the level of awareness in the US of the European Union, Ambassador Pangratis recently gave a speech at Smith College on the European Union, its relationship with the US and its role in the global community.

Among the questions asked was whether the euro will continue to rise over the dollar and whether the EU will be hit by the recession now looming in the US. Pangratis mentioned that the EU has balanced external trade and a much lower fiscal deficit so it might not be hit to an equal extent by a recession. However it is certain that the EU cannot stay completely unaffected by economic developments in the US.

Complex to many, the European Union is not that difficult to understand. Just as in the United States, it has a President, a Federal Administration which is the

Commission, representatives from its member states in the Council of the European Union (such as the Senate in the US) and the European Parliament (such as the House of Representatives). The similarities stop there, however, as the European Union is a group of 27, at the moment, independent states. Contrary to the US where everyone is an American, one can be a good European but at the same time a good German, Italian or Greek. The European Union confers on its citizens additional rights such as to work, study, trade, even voting, not to mention the financial support it offer to the less developed member states. Of course, all members of the union share the euro as the common currency.

Although not in the media's focus, the EU and the US are the two major forces in today's world, accounting for around 60% of global GDP and 40% of global trade. Transatlantic investment accounts for 14 millions of jobs, splitting almost evenly between the EU and the US. It is obvious that there's significant common interest in various areas, and for that reason the European Union and the US have recently set up the Transatlantic Economic Council

in order to improve cooperation in key sectors.

Dr. Pangratis himself is a high-ranking European Union diplomat who has served as Ambassador at the European Commission's Delegation to Argentina and also at senior positions in South Africa and South Korea. He has also been in charge of relations with China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Mongolia. Born on the Greek island of Corfu, he did his undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies in Paris, and although his duties keep him away from his place of birth, he manages to visit frequently. He's married and a father of three children.

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Social Responsibility Program



Congressman Gus Bilirakis with supporters at Brooklyn's The Mirage Diner.

Congressman Gus Bilirakis, who currently represents the Ninth District of Florida as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, was welcomed at an event that took place recently at Brooklyn's The Mirage Diner, where he had the opportunity to meet and listen to long time supporters that exalted the work he's done for the American people. Greek Americans throughout the United States have been organizing fundraising events for Michael Bilirakis' son, who has contributed to the promotion of Greek and Cyprus issues throughout his years of service.

Gus Bilirakis is the Co-Chairman of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus and one of his main goal is, as he said, to "help our motherland, Greece." He is also a Member of the Foreign Relations, Homeland Security, & Veterans Affairs Committees and

Assistant Minority Whip. During his speech, he informed his supporters of his actions and initiatives for the Visa Waiver Program, the Cyprus problem, the Macedonia issue, and he promised that he will continue to fight for the Greek positions.

"Turkey uses the USA. They are not good allies," he stated, and mentioned that his family will always be on the front line. He also said that he had a meeting with Republican Presidential Candidate, Senator John McCain and Ambassador Alexandros Mallias, and if McCain is elected, he and his father will not let him forget the Greek issues.

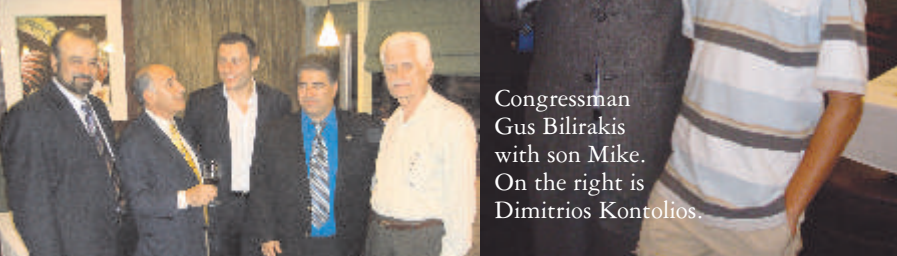
On behalf of the organizing committee, Mr. Markos Marinakis said that "Gus is following in his father's steps and his presence in the House is necessary. We will continue to support him for many years to come." Mr. Marinakis mentioned the Bilirakis family efforts for our national issues and he wished that the Greek American community would soon be supporting one of its own for the presidency.

Mr. Dimitrios B. Kontolios mentioned that Michael Bilirakis was an honored guest at the 5th International Convention of Chians Abroad, which took place in Chios last August, and he said that they were honored to have him participate in all the events and to inspire the young adults. He also thanked Gus for his services to the United States, as well as for Hellenism in general.

A lot of friends were present to welcome Congressman Bilirakis to Brooklyn. Among them were former New York State Assemblyman Matthew Mirones, Tassos Kokaliaris, Stella and Dr. Ronald Kokolis, Stelios Makarigakis, M/M Bill G. & Angela Kontolios, M/M Stelios & Themmy Kontolios, Markos and James Melis, George Ginnis, George Drogaris, Elisavet Tzoumaka, Chris Orfanakos, Dionysios Pilarinos, Nikolaos Taneris, Irene Marinakis, and many more including Georgia Vavas & Steve Mavronis visiting from Baltimore.



From left, Steve Mavronis, Markos Marikanis and Gus Bilirakis.



Congressman Gus Bilirakis with son Mike. On the right is Dimitrios Kontolios.



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GREEK-CANADIAN FOLK MUSICIAN PAVLO CROSSES THE BORDER FOR A PBS SPECIAL AND USA - CANADIAN TOUR

The multi Emmy-winning concert and documentary producer George Veras of Veras Communications is directing the PBS spectacular titled Pavlo's Mediterranean Nights featuring Greek-Canadian folk musician Pavlo. The concert was filmed live at the famous Ford Theater in Detroit and will premiere as a PBS special during their pledge drive in June 2008. Veras, a canny marketer of some of the world's biggest selling concert DVDs such as Yanni's Live at the Acropolis, 60s Pop Rock Reunion and two separate documentaries on influential Greek Americans, believes that Pavlo's pop rock sensibilities and his work ethic will make him a hit in the US. Leading up to the PBS special, Pavlo's Mediterranean Nights will play in select American cities and move on to a summer concert tour across Canada. After which, he'll travel to Europe and Korea and in the fall, he will return to the States for a national tour.

By Athan Karras

This brilliant guitarist and singer Pavlo Simtikidis of Toronto has absorbed and blended Mediterranean music into a completely new and original sound. He is the Greek answer to the Gypsy Kings, using the exciting rhythms of the flamenco gypsies, the

sultry and sensual salsa, and the seductive and fascinating music of Near Eastern belly dancers. Pavlo's Mediterranean Nights shares the stage with dancers who alternate salsa, tango, belly dance, flamenco, and Greek dance rhythms.

Pavlo began his career as a teenager playing with rock bands and later, slowly started to create his own compositions. He paid his dues by playing all kinds of gigs from weddings to small town cafés and bars. He always told his musicians, no venue is too small. He took some time out to put together his own sound by going back to his roots and with his energy and enthusiasm, he was on his way. He has released seven albums, including two gold records in Canada, won the "World Artist of the Year" award at the Canadian Independent Music Awards, and was twice named "Greek Man of the Year" by Top Choice Awards..

His grandfather was born in the Black Sea area of the Pontic Greeks in Turkey and the music he grew up with reflects the fun-loving hospitable character of those people. Unlike other young struggling artists whose parents always encourage them to follow the surest road to success, Pavlo's father recognized his

son's special talent as soon as the five-year-old started playing guitar. As a youngster, Pavlo attended concerts with his father at the famous Massey Hall in Toronto where the two of them enjoyed inspirational performances by the likes of Liona Boyd, Jose Feliciano, and Paco De Lucia. His Dad told him that if he was going to make music he should, "Have the courage to do what you love and the drive to do it well." The dream came true when Pavlo had his own sold-out debut at the Massey. Now, the Toronto-based Greek guitarist has rocketed from obscure far-flung county fairs and small-town conventions onto the world's stage accompanied by a sixteen-piece orchestra, belly dancers, flamenco artists, and salsa troupes.

He studied music at York University and the Harris Institute for the Arts, joined several small ensembles, and seriously studied every aspect of the guitar. In his spare time, he perfected Latin chords and fingerings. In the middle of a flamenco riff, Pavlo has been known to flip the guitar over his head and play it backwards, a la Jimmy Hendrix. Taking a cue from Jose Feliciano, the first great flamenco crossover artist, Pavlo started attracting the attention of other performers

and has played with John McDermott, Liona Boyd, Amy Sky, and Olivia Newton John. Pavlo shines as an original composer and when asked about writing and composing, said, "I am continually driven and inspired by my passions and my emotions. I don't over analyze or think too hard about an idea, I simply take my guitar and let my fingers turn my emotion into music. In essence my music has become my language: I never go seeking for a song; I believe the song finds me. This is the case with this most recent inspiration and I believe it is meant to be shared."

In Canada where, according to him, the population holds on to their ethnicity, his CDs often become best sellers thanks to this new sound combining his acoustic guitar with an exciting range of various Mediterranean instruments and bouzouki from Greece. Pavlo's concert will include various ethnic segments interspersed with production dance numbers. He is reaching out to multicultural audiences who recognize that Mediterranean music has a language of its own and brings people together to enjoy, celebrate, and have a great time. For more information go to: www.pavlo.net.





HEAVY METAL UNDER HEAVY RAIN!

By Christos Kavvadas

If there is one thing that all performers fear when playing at an outdoor venue, it's the rain. And for a band whose name bears a homophone for such an event, it's ironically inopportune. However, Phoenix Reign would not let their second annual concert at Athens Square Park on June 28th be damped by the intense summer storms that came down upon them threatening to wash out the evening, and instead came through with a bombastic performance accompanied by historical reenacting troupe, the Greek Warriors.

The day started out sunny and seemingly perfect for the show, but in the early afternoon while Phoenix Reign's crew began setting up for a 6:00 PM start time, it began to rain. The skies seemed to clear up again but only to make room one for one more torrential downpour that would last until at least 7:00 PM. Most would have called it at day at that point, but to their credit, the band and the actors stayed until the storm ceased, allowing them start the show, late and with damp clothes, but still brimming with the same energy as earlier in the day.

The concert began with tunes from Phoenix Reign's debut album, "Destination Unknown," and quickly progressed to new material including songs like "The Iliad," "The Odyssey" and "The Legend of Alexander," during which the Greek Warriors performed their acts. Muses dressed in white recalled the exploits of the famous 300 Spartans, which the men of the troupe dressed up as to stage battles and stand at arms besides the band while they played. Fans cheered while themselves still drying off from the showers, and were thrilled by the display of history and the musical prowess of guitarists Billy Chrissochos, Kostas Psarros, bassist Chris Pollatos, drummer Wayne Noon and singer, Theresa Gaffney.

While the show was shorter than had originally been planned (50 minutes instead of an hour and a half) because of the delay in starting, no one felt cheated after leaving that evening. Gaffney said so herself: "This is probably the most intense show we ever played, if only for the circumstances which made us more determined to put on a hell of a performance." And that they did. Co-commanders of the Greek Warriors, George Mercinek and Peter Giakoumis also performed under grueling conditions giving the crowd a true Spartan show down. As a special surprise a new Macedonian armor and shield was debuted to coincide with Phoenix Reign's new epic tribute to that greatest of Macedonians, titled "The Legend of Alexander".

The event was sponsored by Unrestrained Magazine "Your authority on the metal underground!" The Athenians' Society, George Tsimoyianis, Eastern Conference of "New Democracy" Local Organization Inc., Planet Del Sol tanning salons, The Aldo's Democratic Club, Gus Pashos & Specialty Motors and other friends. Sound equipment and video production was provided by Nexus Productions (www.djstamatis.com). Official concert photographer was Alexandros Giannakis III.

Those interested in buying a copy of Phoenix Reign's cd can do so at www.phoenixreign.com or other online shopping outlets such as amazon.com, cdbaby.com or www.theomegaorder.com. For more information on the Greek Warriors, visit their site at www.thegreekwarriors.com.



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Growing Up With Loukoumi children's book author grants contest winners three dream days

Winners witness a Mars landing, play pro soccer and cook with a TV chef



"Believe in yourself and dreams come true!" These are the words spoken throughout the children's book *Growing up with Loukoumi*, and last Fall author Nick Katsoris launched *Growing up with Loukoumi Dream Day*, a national contest based on the award-winning children's book, where kids can win the chance to spend a day in their dream career. Recently, three lucky kids got the opportunity to visit NASA for a Mars landing, play soccer with the New York Red Bulls, and meet a television chef.

The book, named one of the best products of 2007 by iParenting Media, teaches children they can be anything when they grow up, if they work hard and believe in themselves. Over 200 Dream Day events were held at schools, libraries and bookstores nationwide where thousands of children entered the contest by drawing a picture of themselves in their future dream career accompanied by the statement: "I Want to be a _____ because..." Over 20 finalists were selected with the top 3 winning the chance to live their Dream Day.

The first winner, Sophie Saidmehr, a nine-year-old girl from Long Island, wants to be a Mars Rover Engineer.

"I've always been interested in other planets," said Sophie. "I want to be a rover engineer and work at NASA and build robots."

And so Katsoris arranged for this young girl to visit Pasadena, CA on Memorial Day weekend to the NASA Jet Propulsion Lab when the Phoenix actually landed on Mars. This future rover engineer was there for this international event, and was among the first people on earth to see the photos from Mars. She also toured the facility including mission control and spent time with an actual Mars Rover engineer.

"I doubted I would be one of the national winners," said Sophie, "but my mom said, 'If you say you will win, you will.' So, I kept saying 'I will win'...and I did! Then Nick Katsoris called and said my Dream Day would come true! I screamed so loud the neighbors could hear me."

"Last week we visited Pasadena for one of the biggest events in my life!" explains Sophie. "On May 25th I witnessed the Phoenix land on Mars! I was so nervous! Everyone was doing the countdown until it landed safely. Then we saw the first pictures. Everyone was cheering and screaming! It was an incredible experience. IT WAS THE BEST TRIP EVER!!!! Like the book *Growing up with Loukoumi* says, 'Believe in yourself and dreams really do come true!'"

The second winner, Lionel Li, an eight-year-old boy from New York, wishes to be a soccer player and he spent the day with the pro soccer team, The New York Red Bulls. He attended a practice and a game, played with the

teammates and had lunch with them.

"I want to be a soccer star because I love to play soccer and it teaches you to cooperate," said Lionel, "and when he received the news he said he was "speechless."

"This experience with the New York Red Bulls is like a dream," said Lionel, "except for the fact that this time it's true! I have learned so much about how we can accomplish anything if we give it determination and the utmost effort."

The third winner, Greek-American Nika Linn, from Fort Collins, Colorado, wants to be a chef on a food television show, and she will have the opportunity to cook on television with celebrated television chef Tony Tantilo on WCBS-TV in New York. She will also attend a taping and meet Rachel Ray on the set of her hit television show.

"The book *Growing up with Loukoumi* teaches kids that they can be anything when they grow up and that if they believe in themselves their dreams will come true," said Katsoris, "but these Dream days are even beyond my expectations for this contest."

Katsoris ventured on each Dream Day to meet the kids and to experience the Dream Days for himself.

"To see Lionel's excitement when he kicked the soccer ball with the Red Bulls was priceless! To be there at NASA and watch the spacecraft land on Mars was incredible. It was like living within a Steven Spielberg film. The anticipation was surreal and the excitement was contagious throughout mission control and the entire NASA facility, and then to witness it through Sophie's eyes and to see how this experience made her believe in herself, is my dream come true! That's what *Growing up with Loukoumi* is all about."

"I didn't want the day to end," said Sophie.

Contest judges included the narrators on the book's accompanying CD: Oscar winner Olympia Dukakis, Grammy Winner Gloria Gaynor, CBS News anchor Alexis Christoforou, Guiding Light's Frank Dicopoulos and American Idol's Constantine Maroulis. The judging panel also included actress Florence Henderson, Fox-5 News Anchor Ernie Anastos, Make-A-Wish Foundation of America VP Jennifer Maher, and iParenting Media Editor-in-chief Elisa All.

"I think it's very important for children to hear and know that there are grown-ups who believe that if you work hard and strive for something, it's possible to have your dreams come true," said Olympia Dukakis, contest judge and narrator on the *Growing up with Loukoumi* CD. "There is no question that children will confront a lot of obstacles,

however, it is important for them to understand that there are possibilities for them. They need to know that adults believe in their potential. It's a message I clearly received from my parents and I've tried to give it to my children and to my grandchildren."

"It's so important for parents to get behind their kids dreams and to offer them the opportunities, the education and the tools that they need," adds co-narrator and judge Constantine Maroulis, who followed his dream on American Idol. "Following your dreams is so vital."

The book is dedicated to the author's Aunt, Kay Battista, a National Teacher of the Year out of New Jersey, who died of a brain tumor over 20 years ago, yet her impact on Katsoris remains as strong today as it did then.

"My Aunt always encouraged me to believe in myself and to follow my dream, which in my case was writing. Now through my writing, I want to spread her message of encouragement and instill in kids that they can be what they want when they grow up if they work hard and believe in themselves."

About the Book:

Growing Up With Loukoumi, the second in a series of children's books by Nick Katsoris, following *Loukoumi* in 2005, has been featured on several national programs including *The Martha Stewart Show*, which called it "Charming, beautiful and gives confidence." Other media outlets followed suit including *The Morning Show with Mike & Juliet* (calling the book "inspiring!"), *Good Day New York* ("Adorable"), *NY Daily News* ("Darling"), and *The Journal News* ("A heartwarming story of a little lamb with big aspirations"). Barnes & Noble booksellers have selected *Growing up with Loukoumi* to be featured on its Graduation gift displays nationwide. The third *Loukoumi* book will be released this Fall and will also include another national drawing contest.

The *Growing Up With Loukoumi* CD includes a narration of both *Loukoumi* books plus an original song by Gloria ("I Will Survive") Gaynor called "Believe." The book debuted at the prestigious Children's Museum of Manhattan and has since has been featured at over 200 storytimes nationwide. \$2 from the sale of each book/CD benefit a national children's charity. Additional proceeds will be donated to the Teachers of the Year Scholarship Fund in memory of Katsoris' Aunt, Kay Battista. The Greek language version of the book will be released by Livanis Publishing this Fall including a CD narrating the book by singer Anna Vissi and her daughter Sophia Karvela.

For more on Dream Day visit www.Loukoumi.com



A RARE View of Young Professionals!

The Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce (HACC) Young Professionals had recently their monthly happy hour networking event at RARE View Rooftop lounge on NYC's east side. This networking event geared towards young Greek-American professionals was a huge success with lots of "kefi" and over 100 attendees. The Young Professionals is a committee within HACC and only a little over a year old.

HACC was formed over 50 years ago for the purpose of promoting and strengthening the economic and cultural ties between the US and Greece. The group is composed of respected and well known doctors, lawyers, shipping industry officials, accountants and

TV producers. Although HACC has members from all different career backgrounds, it had very small percentage of young professionals. Taso Pardalis, an attorney and member of HACC, noticed there was a need for a committee to represent and cater to the needs of young Hellenes like himself. Therefore, he started and became president of the young professionals group with the help of HACC last year and it has already tripled in size.

In addition to monthly happy hour networking events, the group also hosts various educational business and cultural events. Last March, supermarket mogul and billionaire John Catsimatidis was their

keynote speaker and gave an inspirational speech on "The American Dream: Growing Your Business on the Streets of New York." This event received an immense amount of positive feedback from many Greek-Americans and inspired many to follow in the path of Catsimatidis and create their own "American Dream."

The young professionals have planned their next event to occur at the trendy rooftop garden at 230 Fifth in NYC. For information on this event and on becoming a member of the HACC Young Professionals, contact Taso Pardalis at mplawfirm@gmail.com.



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