



The Hellenic American Academy in Lowell, Massachusetts is on the right track say members of the faculty and parish that support it.

Hellenic American Academy of Lowell Roundtable Discusses the Past, Present and Future with TNH

By Theodore Kalmoukos
Special to The National Herald

BOSTON – The principal Doug Anderson, Melia Mahoney the school committee chairperson along with members Dona Zouzias and Mary Themelis and also Steve Themelis president of Holy Trinity's Parish council discussed the state, the challenges and the vision of the Hellenic American Day School of the historic community of the Holy Trinity of Lowell, known today as Hellenic American Academy since its name was changed three years ago, in an interview with the National Herald.

Principal Anderson who brought to the school more than 35 years of educational and administrative experience said, "It's been my first year and I am extremely excited about this opportunity to work with young people, not only of culture but of tremendous knowledge and potential. The school is doing quite well, I see nothing but optimism here. The people care about the children in this community and that includes their culture, their heritage, their knowledge and their future." Principal Anderson teaches social studies as well.

"Today we discussed democracy and what role it played in ancient Greece and where it is today with us," he said.

The school today has 143 pupils pre-kindergarten through Grade 6, 78 boys and 55 girls, the break down is 32 in Pre-K and 110 in 1st to 6th grades.

School committee chairperson Melia Mahoney called the Kindergarten a "feeding program" because as she explained it "feeds up" meaning that the Kindergarten pupils will eventually enroll in the first year school program. She also said that "one of the most amazing things that I see is that in the curriculum of the early childhood development they are also learning Greek."

"A three year old girl came up and greeted me in Greek. Her mother was present, and I asked her what it means. She said it means good morning, how are you," Principal Anderson said. "What surprises me is to hear children speak Greek who come from families who do not speak Greek and to see them fully engaging and participating in the cultural programs. One of our exemplary students in Greek is Asian."

Mr. Anderson visits the classrooms daily and said, "The students greet me in Greek and they are determined to teach me Greek. I am learning a great deal of Greek cul-



A roundtable discussion about the Hellenic American Day School included Principal Doug Anderson, Committee Chairperson Melia Mahoney, Dona Zouzias and Mary and Steve Themelis.

ture through the students."

Concerning the student population and if it is up, down or steady, school committee chairperson Melia Mahoney said, "It has been steady. We had a little bit of a loss last year but we made up for it. I think we have something so special here and we are trying to figure out how we verbalize what we know about this place. We have a diamond and we want to make sure people see it."

According to Principal Anderson the school has eight full time teachers and five support faculty staff for music, computers e.t.c.

"I couldn't be happier with the work that the faculty does," he said.

The operation of the school annually costs \$500,000, according to parish council president Steve Themelis. The income "comes mainly from tuition and through the Endowment. This year they are contributing a little over \$50,000. They have \$750,000 in the Endowment right now. That trust is restricted and the interest comes directly to the school." Mr. Themelis also said that "the church also contributes. Last year it contributed \$110,000."

Asked if the money that the parish contributes towards the operation of the school is a good in-

vestment for the community, Themelis said "the best" and Ms. Mahoney added "absolutely, you put your money in your future." Ms. Mahoney also said that "the school is also the future of the church because it is the young couples, the children, your faith, your heritage. You are insuring it."

The tuition is \$2,550 for the members of the Holy Trinity parish and \$2,850 for non members.

Asked if they agree with the idea that parishes which sustain Day Schools be excluded from their financial obligations to the Archdiocese and instead put the money into the school, Mr. Themelis said, "Personally I think it is a great idea. The way our system is set up here, we are taxed on the expenses of the church, the school is excluded from that."

"It is about the philosophy of how important it is across the country to keep these schools alive," Ms. Mahoney said. "What is the meaning of these schools, what are they providing not just in terms of academics and education only but as Mr. Anderson said in terms of culture, and their faith, and once that answered I think you have a very natural answer when decisions are made that the schools are prioritized."

Some of the reasons the parents should consider sending their children to the school are "it keeps their childhood in a safe environment, their language and culture is respected, and family values are respected."

Asked if the language, the culture and the faith are important elements to all the parents, Mr. Anderson said, "I think it is an important factor sometimes overlooked in society. In this community you can't measure that up until you talk to a child."

Speaking about the near and the future plans of the school Mr. Anderson mentioned the accreditation process.

"The accreditation is a self-study, a critique of the school which come from within, the faculty, the parents and the children, we take a look at ourselves and from that it goes to professionals," he said. "The accreditation will provide us with a foundation of a strategic plan that will hopefully be a blue print not for two years but for the next 100 years. We already had people here from the accreditation committee last October that validated the hard work of the faculty." "Accreditation also means quality assurance of education of the child," Ms. Mahoney added.

Asked if through the 100 years

of continuous existence of the school, can the hundreds of graduates do well in academics, professional life, or just life in general without the school being accredited, Ms. Mahoney said, "that is absolutely true" and she added "but in order to move on I think that also people are looking for certain types of validation."

Asked if stability in administration and faculty are pivotal to the school, Mr. Themelis said, "Yes it is critical."

Asked how the school is administered and who makes the decisions, Ms. Mahoney said, "The parish council of the parish makes the final decisions. They have put in place a school committee that they trust and it serves as an intermediary between the school and the parish council."

Principal Anderson added, "I am responsible for the day to day operation of the school regarding recess going to a teacher's evaluation. I communicate on a weekly basis at least with the chair of the school committee or the parish council president."

As far as the Niarchos Foundation grant of \$280,000 for the purpose to establish seventh and eighth grades with the terms being that the parish would match the \$200,000 dollars by May 2008, Mr. Themelis said "we have \$135,000 plus in the CD and the deadline is for May 1 and we are still working in meeting the deadline. I have spoken to individuals who may give contributions anonymously to make that difference."

"We want to put in a Middle School which will be self-sustained. We do not want to strain Pre-K through 6th," Ms. Mahoney said.

Principal Anderson said that "our focal group right now as far as our student population will be our current 4th grade. Maybe we will be able to begin the 7th and the 8th grades in two years."

Dona Souza a graduate of the school said, "The spirit is here. Every time the students get up on the stage they are amazing with their performances."

Mary Themelis an educator herself said, "The school is a wonderful place that we fortunate to have. It has a lot of promise and we should keep it alive. It is a very valuable school, in so many ways including the culture and the teachers. It has so much to offer."

Today the parish according to Mr. Themelis has "650 families of good standing. We have other senior citizens that do not pay their full membership. We are talking about around 1,000 members."

GOINGS ON...

MARCH 17
WASHINGTON, D.C. – The President of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation Mr. Anthony Padiamitriou cordially invites the community to a dramatic reading of selected passages "Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War," with commentary by Dr. Josiah Ober Professor of Classics and Political Science, Constantinos Mitsotakis Chair, School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford University, California at The Shakespeare Theatre Company Lansburgh Theatre (450 7th Street NW) on Monday, March 17 at 7 PM. Dramatic reading by professional actors. Directed by David Muse, Associate Director, Shakespeare Theatre Company. The Spartans consider arguments for and against going to war with the Athenians, exposing timeless issues of foreign policy. Pericles delivers his great funeral oration setting forth the highest ideals of the civilization of Classical Athens. Those ideals are tested when Athens destroys Melos. Alcibiades urges the Athenians to expand their empire, but the invasion in Sicily fails, leading to Thucydides' sober assessment of the most momentous event in all Hellenic history.

MARCH 20
NEW YORK – The Hellenic American Bankers Association cordially invites the community to its Executive of the Year Award Dinner in honor of Captain Panagiotis N. Tsakos and Nikolaos P. Tsakos, President & CEO of Tsakos Energy Navigation Limited at The New York Athletic Club (180 Central Park South) on Thursday, March 20 at 6 PM. Tickets are \$250. Master of ceremonies will be Sotirios Johnson, host of NPR's Morning Edition, WNYC Radio. For more information, call 212-421-1057.

MARCH 22
STAMFORD, Conn. – The Stamford chapter of AHEPA and the Greek Orthodox Church of the Archangels cordially invite the community to a performance by The Hellenic Dancers of New Jersey on at the church hall (at 1527 Bedford Street, Stamford, CT 06905) on Saturday, March 22 at 7 PM. Doors will open at 7:00 p.m. for a buffet of Greek appetizers and wine (included in the ticket price). The performance will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 if payment is received by March 15; \$40 if payment is received after March 15 or at the door; \$10 for students; children under 12 free. This is a fundraiser for the benefit of the Stamford AHEPA Scholarship Fund. The Hellenic Dancers of New Jersey have performed at Presidential rallies and inaugurations, for the royalty and ambassadors of several nations, the NJ State Ethnic and Diversity Festival, won first prize at the Garden State Arts Center Intra-State Competition, sent dancers for the Closing Ceremonies of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, as well as many other Greek and other cultural festivals and programs. Their most recent performance was at the Annual New York Times Travel Show at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City on March 2, 2008. For more information, call 203-354-5370.

MARCH 26
NEW YORK – The Cyprus Federation of America and The International Coordinating Committee Justice for Cyprus cordially invite the community to "Memories in Cypriot Soil," by Professors Susan Drucker and Gary Gumpert at the Cyprus House (13 East 40th St.) on Wednesday, March 26, 2008 at 6:30 PM. The presentation is based on research on the forgotten history of the Jewish Detention Camps run by the British on Cyprus after WWII and their relationship to Cypriot independence. While the subject has been widely documented in Israel, the current project examines the camps in terms of their impact on Cyprus and its people. The Professors are planning on filming a documentary on this subject. Over the past 15 years Susan Drucker and Gary Gumpert have conducted research in Cyprus. Their work has focused on the division of Cyprus and the impact of communi-

cation technology on that division. Their work in Cyprus began in 1994 as an extension of their study of the Greek American Community in Astoria. They have lectured throughout the world on the role of communication in sites of conflict and division. They have visited Cyprus at least 20 times and have published extensively as the result of their research. They have interviewed Presidents Clerides, Papadopoulos and Christofias, as well as Turkish Cypriot community leaders Rauf Denktash and Mehmet Talat and other notable figures in Cyprus. They have conducted Media Literacy workshops for Greek and Turkish Cypriot participants. For more information, call Despina Axiotakis at 201-444-8237.

MAY 2 – JUNE 1
NEW YORK – Theatron Inc. cordially invite the community to the play "39 & Single" (Despoina...cton 39!) at The Hellenic Cultural Center Theatre (the intersection of Crescent Street and Newtown Avenue in Astoria) from May 2 – June 1 on Friday and Saturday at 8PM, Sundays at 2:30 & 7:30PM. This bitter-sweet comedy written by one of Greece's foremost teams, Sakellarios and Giannakopoulos, examines an old Greek tradition as it relates to marriage. Tlemachos postpones marrying his girlfriend in order for his older sister, whom he lives with, to marry first. His closest friend convinces him that the fastest way to attract potential husbands is to place an ad in the newspapers. The suitors arrive and are ready to marry but it turns out that the women they meet in Tlemachos' house, are not his sister. This leads to a series of hilarious episodes and farcical encounters. Directed by Larisa Antipa. For more information, call 718-721-7610.

THROUGH MAY 2008
NEW YORK – The Children's Museum of Manhattan cordially invites the community to "Gods, Myths & Mortals: Discover Ancient Greece," an exhibition which allows children to explore the world of ancient Greece at CMOM (The Tisch Building, 212 West 83rd Street). Your initial tour guides will be the great gods Zeus, Poseidon and Athena as they reminisce about their powers and responsibilities. Learn how the Ancient Greeks believed gods and mortals interacted and take an on-screen personality quiz to determine which mythological character you are most like. Visit the gymnasium (school) and oikos (home) to discover which skills were most valued in Ancient Greek boys and girls. Explore the importance of athletic competition as you arm wrestle ancient Greek counterparts using mechanical arms, or test your leg strength as you learn about ancient jumpers. Become familiar with the ancient Greek alphabet by translating messages from Greek to English. Learn about the heroism of ancient Greek women in myth and daily life and compete with the goddess Athena in a virtual weaving contest. Climb inside a 12 foot tall Trojan Horse before stepping into Homer's great epic poem, The Odyssey where you will journey through rocky caves and over open seas; escape the crawl-through Cyclops Cave; and sing like a Siren in the Sirens Karaoke Cove. Be prepared to face on-screen dilemmas, your choices will be tracked along the way and your personalized on-screen Hero Record can be e-mailed home. Budding archaeologists can visit the Temple of Zeus at Olympia and assist in the reconstruction of a 3-D temple; learn about column construction, sculptures and the giant statue of Zeus (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World). For more information, call Janet Ralston at 212-721-1223.

NOTE TO OUR READERS
This calendar of events section is a complimentary service to the Greek American community. All parishes, organizations and institutions are encouraged to e-mail their information 3-4 weeks ahead of time, and no later than Monday of the week before the event, to english.editor@thenationalherald.com.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Vote on our website!

You have the chance to express your opinion on our website on an important question in the news.

The results will be published in our printed edition next week along with the question for that week.

The question this week is: Do you think Florida Governor Charlie Crist would be a good vice presidential running mate for John McCain?

1 Yes
3 No
11 Don't Know

The results for last week's question: Will Cyprus' new president-elect Dimitris Christofias' communist party affiliation cause problems with the country's foreign relations?

48.8% voted "Yes"
39.5% voted "No"
11.6% voted "I don't know"

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