



# REPORT



Volume 38 Number 243

AMERICAN HELLENIC INSTITUTE

May 2011

## AHI HONORS COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AT 36TH AWARDS GALA



Honorees (L-R) American College of Greece represented by Dr. David Horner, Dr. Takey Crist, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, Michael Constantine, Larry Michael.

The American Hellenic Institute (AHI) hosted its 36th Anniversary Hellenic Heritage Achievement and Public Service Awards Dinner, March 12, 2011 at The Capital Hilton, Washington, D.C.

AHI honored a distinguished set of awardees based upon their important career or institutional achievements and contributions to the Greek American community or community at large. This year's honorees were: The American College of Greece, U.S. Rep. Shelley Berkley, Nevada's First Congressional District; Larry Michael, The "Voice of the Washington Redskins;" Michael Constantine, actor, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding;" and Dr. Takey Crist, a leader in Women's Healthcare and community activist.

Jane Monzures, host, WGN's "Living Healthy Chicago" was the evening's emcee and brought a lively presence to the banquet program that included her sending a picture of the audience to her Twitter followers. AHI Secretary of the Board of Directors Nicholas G. Karambelas, Esq. introduced Monzures.



Jane Monzures.

The Marines of Headquarters Battalion presented the colors and the American and Greek national anthems were performed by Maria Pearce of the Apollonia Band. Father Steven Zorzos, Saint Sophia Cathedral, offered the

Continued on page 7

## AHI, AHI FOUNDATION ANNOUNCE NEW PRESIDENTS

The American Hellenic Institute (AHI) announced longtime executive director, Nick Larigakis, as its new President and Chief Operating Officer, effective January 1, 2011. Larigakis succeeds AHI President Aleco Haralambides, who will remain on the AHI Board of Directors.

"Nick has done an outstanding job as executive director for 19 years," said AHI Founder Eugene Rossides. "He has fulfilled a tremendous amount of responsibility that has helped AHI meet its mission. I am confident his enthusiasm, dedication, and leadership will continue to be an asset for AHI, and the Greek American community, going forward."



Nick Larigakis.



Dr. Spiro Spireas.

Continued on page 9

## AHI HOSTS SERIES OF "TOWN HALL SCREENINGS" FOR CYPRUS DOCUMENTARY

In February and April, AHI hosted a series of nationwide "Town Hall Screenings" of the one-hour documentary "Cyprus Still Divided: A U.S. Foreign Policy Failure." At each venue a panel discussion or forum was held following the screening.

Continued on page 10

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<b>AHI General News</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>AHI in the News</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Noon Forums</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Visitors to Hellenic House</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Statements and Announcements</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Action Alerts</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>AHI Business Network</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Member Spotlights</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

### AHI HOSTS ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL SALUTE TO GREEK INDEPENDENCE



Rep. Gus Bilirakis receiving 'The Hermes Award' from the Hermes Expo International (L-R) Nick Larigakis, Amb. Pavlos Anastasiades, Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Amb. Vassilis Kaskarelis.



Nick Larigakis, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Rep. Frank Pallone with group of students present in traditional costume from St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda, MD.

AHI celebrated the 190th anniversary of Greek Independence Day by hosting its annual "Congressional Salute to Greek Independence Day" on April 6, 2011. The common democratic ideals held by Greece and the United States were reaffirmed by several members of Congress at the event which was held in cooperation with the co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, U.S. Reps. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY).

Members of Congress who addressed the audience included (in order of appearance): U.S. Reps. Albio Sires (D-NJ), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee; Frank Pallone (D-NJ), and Michael Grimm (R-NY). The members' statements can be found at [www.aheworld.org](http://www.aheworld.org).

Special guest speakers were Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. Vassilis Kaskarelis and Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the U.S. Pavlos Anastasiades. Representatives from the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) joined AHI and the Greek American community in the celebration.

Each of the speakers emphasized their admiration for Hellenic culture and for the valiant and inspirational struggle for Greek Independence achieved in 1821. They also expressed their support for a proper settlement of the Cyprus issue, a proper resolution to the FYROM name-recognition issue, and religious freedom for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Also during the evening, there was a presentation of traditional Greek

dances performed by the Return to Origins Greek Folk Dance Troupe under the direction of Rena Papapostolou. The Greek School of Saint George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda, Md., sang the national anthems of the U.S. and Greece.

### AHI SUBMITS FY12 FOREIGN AID TESTIMONY TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS PANEL

AHI submitted testimony to the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies on the Obama Administration's foreign aid proposals for FY2012 on Thursday, April 14, 2011.

In the best interests of the United States, AHI's testimony opposed: 1) any military assistance the administration will request for Turkey until Turkey removes its troops and illegal Turkish settlers in Cyprus; 2) aid the administration will request for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM); and 3) any reduction that might be introduced in the aid levels for the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

In addition, the testimony strongly opposed the \$7.5 million reduction of Economic Support Fund (ESF) funding for Cyprus. The FY2012 proposed level of funding is \$3.5 million. However, AHI testified that it supports continued ESF funding for Cyprus as long as it is tied exclusively to bi-communal projects of the island as mandated by U.S. law. The law states U.S. funds are to support only "measures aimed at reunification."

This House Appropriations Subcommittee is chaired by U.S. Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX). U.S. Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) is the ranking member. Visit [www.aheworld.org](http://www.aheworld.org) to read AHI's testimony.

### AHIF PRESIDENT HONORED AT HERMES EXPO



AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas receiving his honor from Hermes Founder Paul Kotrotsios. To their left is Christos Stratakis, chairman, U.S. Greece Business Advisory Council.

AHI participated at the 20th Hermes International Expo at the Tropicana in Atlantic City, N.J., April 2-3, 2011. At the expo's awards gala, AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas, who is the founder and CEO of Sigmapharm Laboratories, was honored.

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

“We congratulate AHI Foundation President Dr. Spireas for his well-deserved honor at the Hermes Expo,” said AHI President Nick Larigakis. “During his career, Dr. Spireas has achieved professional excellence, and he consistently gives back to the community.”

In addition, President Larigakis participated at the expo’s “Professional Growth and Youth Mentor Fair” as one of four speakers to address an audience of young professionals on the importance of the mentoring process. The other three participants were: AHIF President Dr. Spireas, U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD), and Aris Melissaratos, former secretary of Business & Economic Development for the State of Maryland. The mentor fair also provided a forum for specialized workshops and a networking session. Moreover, at the awards gala, President Larigakis accepted an award on behalf of U.S. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-FL), who is the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues. In acceptance, Larigakis commended Congressman Bilirakis for his long-standing support of Greek American issues, including his recent introduction of H.Res.180 that urges Turkey to lift religious restrictions on the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Finally, President Larigakis addressed a breakfast forum on the needs and challenges of the Greek American community on April 3, 2011. The Hermes International Expo is organized by longtime AHI member Paul Kotrosios.

### AHI PARTICIPATES AT HALKI-THEMED FORUM



*Nick Larigakis speaking at Halki panel.*

AHI participated at a panel discussion “The Theological School of Halki: Past, Present, and Future” held by the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England Cultural Events Committee on March 31, 2011.

AHI President Nick Larigakis was a panelist speaking on the topic “Halki—U.S. Position and Responsibility.” He was joined on the panel by Historian and Philanthropist Christos Papoutsy, George Rockas, Esq., who served as chair of the International Religious Freedom Conference, Brussels; former Rhode Island State Senator Lou Raptakis, and Professor Michalis Psalidopoulos, C. Karamanlis Chair in Hellenic & Southeastern European Studies, Tufts University. Greek Consul General of Boston Elias Fotopoulos offered remarks. Mrs. Mary Papoutsy served as moderator and His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios oversaw the panel discussion.

Larigakis discussed the importance of the community’s work to make policymakers aware of the restrictions on religious freedom placed upon the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which includes the closure of Halki. He brought to the attention of the audience the significance of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998 as it relates to Turkey and the fact that the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which was created by IFRA, has placed Turkey on its “Watch List” for two consecutive years, 2009 and 2010. Moreover, Larigakis created awareness about legislation, H.Res.180, that urges Turkey lift its restrictions on religious freedom of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the important role local communities have to bring it to legislators’ attention. “In addition, when the Theological School of Halki is re-opened, it is important that it is administered by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and not administered by the Turkish government,” he added.

### AHI MEETS DEPUTY ASST. SECRETARY OF STATE

AHI President Nick Larigakis met with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs Tina S. Kaidanow, March 30, 2011, at the U.S. Department of State. President Larigakis discussed U.S. policy in the eastern Mediterranean, the Cyprus issue, the FYROM name-recognition issue, and religious freedom for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. With respect to a Cyprus solution, Larigakis emphasized that the U.S. should call for the removal of Turkish troops and settlers and exert pressure on Ankara to not manipulate the ongoing direct talks. Also attending the meeting from the Department of State were Senior Greece Desk Office Christopher Snipes and Cyprus Desk Officer Adam Scarlatelli. AHI’s Policy Statements were also presented.

### AHI CELEBRATES GREEK INDEPENDENCE AT WHITE HOUSE

AHI celebrated Greek Independence Day at the White House on March 25, 2011. AHI President Nick Larigakis and Secretary Nicholas Karambelas attended the ceremony at which President Barack Obama and His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios provided remarks. “We thank President Obama for demonstrating ‘philotimo’ toward the Greek American community by hosting this event to honor Greek Independence,” Larigakis said. “The event serves to reaffirm the strong bonds of friendship between Greece and the United States.” Also invited but could not attend the ceremony were AHI Founder and Board Member Gene Rossides and AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiros Spireas.

### AHI, AHIF LEADERS MEET ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS

Leaders of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) and AHI Foundation (AHIF) met with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on Friday, February 11, 2011. AHI President Nick Larigakis and Founder Gene Rossides were joined by AHI Foundation President Spiros Spireas at the meeting.

## AHI GENERAL NEWS



Leaders of AHI and AHI Foundation present His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios with a gift following their meeting. Pictured (L-R): AHI President Nick Larigakis, AHI Founder Gene Rossides, Archbishop Demetrios, and AHI Foundation President Spiro Spireas.

“We had a wonderful meeting with Archbishop Demetrios,” said Larigakis. “We discussed issues of mutual concern, including religious freedom and the plight of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We appreciated the opportunity to share our initiatives and programs that serve to help these causes.”

Archbishop Demetrios thanked AHI for its role in the community, working on issues that serve to strengthen relations between the United States and Greece and Cyprus as well as its advocating for religious freedom.

Added AHI Foundation President Spireas, “We appreciated the opportunity to meet with a truly inspirational spiritual leader, Archbishop Demetrios, and exchange ideas and plans for the effective promotion of Hellenic education and culture, and how we can all work together to meet this challenging common goal.”

### ALUM'S STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE PUBLISHED

Roula Adonakis, a Master of Public Administration candidate at Wayne State University, had her first-person account of her participation on the AHI Foundation Foreign Policy Study Abroad Program published in the University of Michigan's Department of Classical Studies' newsletter, announced the AHI Foundation. “It is wonderful to see the participants of our study abroad program, like Roula, have the opportunity to share her first-hand experiences with her peers,” said AHI President Nick Larigakis. “We thank the University of Michigan's Department of Classical Studies for affording her the opportunity to tell her story. We hope it will inspire others to participate in the program.” Adonakis is a 2009 graduate from the University of Michigan where she earned a B.A. in Modern Greek and Political Science. “The trip was a once-in-a-lifetime experience I will never forget,” said Adonakis in her account.

### AHI MEETS NEW U.S. ENVOY TO TURKEY

AHI President Nick Larigakis met with new U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Francis J. Ricciardone, Jan. 13, 2011, at the U.S. Department of State. President Larigakis congratulated the ambassador on his new position and discussed U.S. policy toward Turkey and its impact upon issues of importance to the Greek American community. Moreover, Larigakis expressed concern over Turkey's wayward foreign policy direction. AHI's

Policy Statements and a copy of the documentary “Cyprus Still Divided: A U.S. Foreign Policy Failure” were presented to the ambassador.

### AHI MEETS FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHAIR



AHI President Nick Larigakis with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

AHI President Nick Larigakis visited Capitol Hill to congratulate and welcome members of Congress to Washington to start the 112th Congress on Jan. 5, 2011. Among the members who took the time to meet with President Larigakis was U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee. He congratulated the congresswoman on her reelection and rise to become chairman. Rep. Ros-Lehtinen has demonstrated support for the Greek American community's positions on issues and has been a recent vocal critic of Turkey's foreign policy direction. In addition, Larigakis had a friendly exchange with U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), who is a longstanding member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and co-chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

### AHI IN THE NEWS

AHI President Nick Larigakis provided an in-depth interview to *Greek News* Journalist Vicki James Yiannias that was featured as a double-page spread in the publication's April 4, 2011 edition. Yiannias conducted the interview soon after AHI's New York City screening of the documentary “Cyprus Still Divided: A U.S. Foreign Policy Failure” at New York University. In the interview, Larigakis discusses the importance of the documentary and what the community can do to create awareness about it. He also provided his thoughts on recent developments in the eastern Mediterranean.

#### Letters to the Editor

President Larigakis submitted a letter to the editor to *The Washington Post* on March 24, 2011 rebutting a statement made by Turkey's Ambassador to the U.S. Namik Tan. In a March 15, 2011 letter to the editor to *The Post*, Ambassador Tan stated “Freedom of expression and media are safeguarded by Turkish legislation” as part of his defense of the country's record to protect journalists. Larigakis contended that the U.S. Department of State and European Union would differ, citing statements

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

released by both entities that expressed “...concern about recent police actions against journalists in Turkey.” He also challenged Ambassador Tan’s statement that “The rule of law is a fundamental tenet of Turkish democracy,” citing Turkey’s blatant violation of the rule of law in Cyprus, the suppression of religious freedom in Turkey, and frequent violations of Greece’s sovereignty in the Aegean.

### Op-Eds

In sum, five op-eds, three written by Gene Rossides and two by Nick Larigakis were published in a number of Greek American publications.

#### **“Obama is the key problem regarding Turkey”**

By Gene Rossides, January 8, 2011. Appearing in *The National Herald*, *Greek News*, *Hellenic News of America*, *The Greek Star*, and *The Hellenic Voice*.

#### **“2011: A Year of Opportunity”**

By Nick Larigakis, January 22, 2011. Appearing in *The National Herald*, *Greek News*, *Hellenic News of America*, *The Greek Star*, and *The Hellenic Voice*.

#### **“The Egypt Crisis and Turkey’s Occupation of Cyprus”**

By Gene Rossides, February 5, 2011. Appearing in *The National Herald*, *Greek News*, *Hellenic News of America*, *The Greek Star*, and *The Hellenic Voice*.

#### **“Greece: A Frontline State for U.S. Interests”**

By Nick Larigakis, March 7, 2011. Appearing in *The National Herald*, *Greek News*, *Hellenic News of America*, *The Greek Star*, and *The Hellenic Voice*.

#### **“Turkey—Ally or Adversary?”**

By Gene Rossides, April 9, 2011. Appearing in *The National Herald*, *Greek News*, *Hellenic News of America*, *The Greek Star*, and *The Hellenic Voice*.

For complete versions of the referenced items in “AHI In the News,” please visit AHI’s web site at [www.aheworld.org/press\\_releases/](http://www.aheworld.org/press_releases/).

## NOON FORUMS

### ***The Holocaust in Greece During WWII Recounted***

AHI hosted a Noon Forum on “The Holocaust in Northern Greece during World War II” featuring AHI Foundation Fellow Dr. Harry Dinella. Dr. Dinella is a former U.S. Army foreign area officer for Greece. His presentation recounted the fate of the Jewish community in Nazi-occupied Greece, which numbered approximately 80,000 in 1941 and eventually lost 87 percent of its population. He also explored the roles of the German military, Greek authorities and resistance groups, and prominent local community leaders during this period of history.



Harry Dinella speaking at AHI Noon Forum.

## VISITORS TO HELLENIC HOUSE

### **CYPRUS’S FOREIGN AFFAIRS PERMANENT SECRETARY VISITS AHI**



(L-R) AHI Board Member Kostas Alexakis, Ambassador Pavlos Anastasiades, AHI Founder Gene Rossides, Ambassador Nicholas Emiliou, AHI President Nick Larigakis, Cyprus Federation of America President Panicos Papanicolaou, and Director of the Permanent Secretary’s Office Dimitris Hatzirygyrou.

The Permanent Secretary of the Republic of Cyprus’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicholas Emiliou, visited Hellenic House on Feb. 14, 2011. “We sincerely thank Ambassador Emiliou for taking the time out of his busy itinerary to meet with AHI,” said President Nick Larigakis. “We had a thorough discussion about the progress of the current negotiation process for a Cyprus settlement, including the recent UN efforts to intensify the process.” In addition, the permanent secretary expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus to AHI for its contributions to keep the Cyprus problem on the policy agenda and in the public forum. This included, among other things, AHI initiatives such as the “Town Hall Screenings” of the documentary “Cyprus Still Divided: A U.S. Foreign Policy Failure” that has aired on public television. His Excellency Pavlos Anastasiades, ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the U.S.; Mr. Dimitris Hatzirygyrou, director, Permanent Secretary’s Office; First Secretary of the Embassy of Cyprus Solon Savva, and Panicos Papanicolaou, president, Cyprus Federation of America accompanied Ambassador Emiliou. AHI Founder and Board of Director Gene Rossides

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

and Board Member Kostas Alexakis also participated. President Larigakis led the discussion.

### AU'S CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM VISITS HELLENIC HOUSE



*Student briefing.*

Students from American University's International Relations and Conflict Resolution Program visited the Hellenic House on Feb. 23, 2011. The 27 students in the program hail from across the United States and six other countries. American University's International Relations and Conflict Resolution Program is directed by Assistant Professor Eleftherios A. Michael, Ph.D. In April, he led the students on a delegation to Greece, Cyprus and Turkey where they studied the role of Greece and Cyprus in the quest for lasting peace and stability in the region, Greek-Turkish relations, and the consequences of the invasion and occupation of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkey. "We congratulate Dr. Michael for the outstanding job he has done in leading this important program at American University," said President Nick Larigakis. AHI Board Secretary Nick Karambelas also participated. President Larigakis led the discussion.

### AHI WELCOMES GREEK MINISTER OF CULTURE & TOURISM



*(L-R) James Marketos, Ambassador Vassilis Kaskarelis, Nick Larigakis, Pavlos Geroulanos, Ted Pedas, James Pedas and Gene Rossides.*

Greece's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mr. Pavlos Geroulanos, visited Hellenic House on March 17, 2011. "We wel-

comed the opportunity to meet with Minister Geroulanos during his visit to the United States," said AHI President Nick Larigakis. "We had a productive discussion about the minister's goals to increase tourism to Greece as well as learning about cultural initiatives that Greece is undertaking." Ambassador of Greece to the United States Vassilis Kaskarelis accompanied Minister Geroulanos. AHI Board of Directors Members Gene Rossides, James Marketos, along with AHI supporters Ted Pedas and Jim Pedas, participated. President Larigakis led the discussion.

### GREECE'S NATIONAL DEFENSE & FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHAIR VISITS



*(L-R) Ambassador of Greece, Vassilis Kaskarelis, Nick Larigakis and Konstantinos Vrettos.*

The Hellenic Parliament's Chairman of National Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Konstantinos Vrettos, visited Hellenic House on March 16, 2011. "We appreciate Chairman Vrettos taking time from his busy itinerary to visit with us," said AHI President Nick Larigakis, who led the discussion. "We had a fruitful discussion of issues of mutual importance, and we look forward to working together to strengthen relations between the United States and Greece."

Ambassador of Greece to the United States Vassilis Kaskarelis and Aristidis Strimbakos, first secretary (political), Embassy of Greece, accompanied Chairman Vrettos. The AHI Board of Directors hosted an intimate dinner for Chairman Vrettos and his wife the previous evening.

## STATEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### AHI Publishes 2011 Policy Statements on Greek American Issues

In March, AHI released its 2011 Policy Statements, which discuss issues affecting the Greek American community as they pertain to United States relations with Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey.

The policy statements were approved by a record number of membership-based organizations including: American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), American Hellenic Council of California, Armenian National Committee of

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

America (ANCA), Cyprus Federation of America, Evrytarian Association of America “Velouchi,” Hellenic American National Council (HANC), International Coordination Committee-Justice for Cyprus (PSEKA), Pancretan Association of America, Pan-Pontian Federation of U.S.A and Canada, Panepirotic Federation of America, and United Chios Societies of America and Canada.

The policy statements serve as a guide when communicating positions to U.S. policy makers and the media. The positions are based on the best interests of the United States. AHI strongly urges everyone to utilize these statements to their full potential. Visit [www.aheworld.org](http://www.aheworld.org) to download a copy.

### **Foreign Affairs Chair’s Support for Hellenic, Religious Freedom Welcomed**

AHI welcomed House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen’s (R-FL) reiterated support for the reunification of Cyprus, the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and Greece’s “good faith efforts” to resolve the name dispute with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) following a meeting she had with Chairman of the Hellenic Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense Konstantinos Vrettos on March 15, 2011. Chairman Ros-Lehtinen stated she was pleased to meet with Chairman Vrettos and the two expressed a “shared hope” for a permanent and lasting solution to the Cyprus issue. She also expressed “unwavering support” for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and was pleased to see relations between Greece and Israel improve. A link to her full statement can be found at [www.aheworld.org](http://www.aheworld.org).

### **AHI Rebutts NGO’s Briefing Paper on Cyprus Settlement**

In March, AHI issued a statement to rebut a briefing paper published by the International Crisis Group (ICG) on February 22, 2011. The ICG briefing paper “Cyprus: Six Steps toward a Settlement” disregarded the rule of law and recommended more concessions from the Republic of Cyprus, which is the victim of Turkish aggression. In addition, AHI’s rebuttal statement, authored by AHI Foundation Chair of Fellows Dr. Van Coufoudakis, points out that ICG’s acceptance of funding from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs discredits ICG’s proposed steps toward a Cyprus settlement, which obviously favors Turkey’s position.

### **Senator’s Statement on Human Rights Violation in Occupied Cyprus Lauded**

AHI applauded a statement by Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) that called the disruption of Christmas liturgy at Agios Synesios by security services in the Turkish-occupied Cypriot town of Rizokarpaso “appalling” and the act “should be roundly condemned by people of good will.” He also called for the removal of restrictions on religious freedom in occupied Cyprus. Moreover, Senator Cardin expressed concern about the State Department’s tendency to “downplay” the difficulties faced by Orthodox Christians to hold services in occupied Cyprus. He

co-chairs the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) and is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The senator entered the statement into the Congressional Record on January 25, 2011.

## ACTION ALERTS

**April 5, 2011**

AHI chapter presidents, team leaders, and friends were encouraged to contact their U.S. representatives requesting that they co-sponsor H.Res.180, a resolution introduced March 17, 2011 by U.S. Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) that urges Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The resolution rests with the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.

## 36TH ANNUAL AWARDS GALA

*Continued from page 1*

invocation. Apollonia provided the musical entertainment.

Opening the evening’s program were AHI President Nick Larigakis and AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas, both of who offered greetings. In addition, they reviewed the initiatives and programs that AHI and AHIF provide the community.

### **Honorees Humbled, Moved**



*Dr. Spiro Spireas.*



*Nick Larigakis.*

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

The American College of Greece received the Hellenic Heritage National Public Service Award for its pioneering role in cultivating a fertile intellectual and cultural collaboration between Greece and the United States through education.

In acceptance of the award, American College of Greece President David Horner stated, “As an American and a Greek institution we feel a special bond and obligation to the Greek-American community. We understand the aspiration of this community to preserve its unique inheritance. And we are determined to deploy our unique resources, as the oldest and largest American college or university in Europe to support this goal. So we thank AHI for this singular recognition that affirms not only the mission and the history but also the promise of the American College of Greece.”

Larry Michael received the Hellenic Heritage Achievement Award for his unparalleled achievements and excellence in the field of sports journalism.

“Thank you for bestowing this honor on me,” said Michael. “I am humbled by it.”

Michael credited his parents for instilling in him a “Greek work ethic” for any success he has achieved and lauded the work of AHI has done over the years for important causes. He cited three attributes one must have to succeed: talent, work ethic, and passion.

He remarked, “But I was trying to think about what was the common denominator that maybe we all here tonight have. The Greek-Americans, or you know some of our visitors here as well, I think everybody that is here is respecting what AHI has done over the years and it is such and important, important cause... What is the common denominator that we have here?... I think we all share that those three things: talent, work ethic, and passion.”

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-NV) received the Hellenic Heritage National Public Service Award for her commitment to public service and her support in strengthening United States relations with Greece and Cyprus, which she reaffirmed strongly in her acceptance speech.

“I may not be the smartest person in the world, but I know when I see an illegal occupation, and there’s an illegal occupation going on in the nation of Cyprus and it needs to end now. I don’t know much about naming countries, but the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia should not have the name Macedonia, it belongs to someone else. And shame on the Turks for treating with such disrespect the Ecumenical Patriarch, it is time that they recognize the Ecumenical Patriarch and gave back the land that they stole,” she remarked.

Congresswoman Berkley also commented on the emerging relationship between Israel and Greece and Cyprus, “I am very happy that there’s been a thawing of relations between Greece and the state of Israel. I am hoping that it will continue, because they are two democracies in a very, very dangerous part of the world. The Cypriots, the Greeks, and the Jews have a long history and it’s time that we put our differences behind us and work together for the goals and the values that we all share.”



*View of Ballroom.*

She concluded by expressing her appreciation for being made to feel as if she is part of a family, “I may not have any Greek blood in my veins, but I have a Greek head, and a Greek heart and I cannot tell you how honored I am each and every day to know that I have been so accepted by the community, and that you consider me one of your own.”

Actor Michael Constantine received the Hellenic Heritage Achievement Award for his unparalleled achievements and excellence in the performing arts, which was presented by 2010 Hellenic Heritage Achievement Award honoree John Aniston.

Constantine wove comedic tales and anecdotes from his childhood days ranging from his Greek school adventures and poem recitals to his service as an alter boy to his enjoyment of Greek culture—the food, music, dancing and when Greek families came together for fun. He recounted that growing up he did not have grandparents, uncles and aunts, and cousins because his relatives were in Greece and the cost to visit them was just too much. Constantine added that acting provided him with his first opportunity to visit Greece where they shot a movie titled “Island of Love.”

“So now finally, anyhow, I’m in a whole room full of Greeks, and I am delighted to be here,” he concluded. “I thank you all for this wonderful, wonderful honor. I guarantee you that I will treasure it.”

Dr. Takey Crist, obstetrician and gynecologist, received the Hellenic Heritage National Public Service Award for his dedicated community activism in reunifying Cyprus and preserving its culture, and for his advocacy for women’s health.

“I would like to take the opportunity to thank the American Hellenic Institute. We must never forget the dedication of Eugene Rossides and what he started 37 years ago,” Dr. Crist said. “I am here tonight because of my Cypriot parents, who instilled in me the ideals of our heritage.”

Dr. Crist credited his teachers that he had growing up in North Carolina, and he acknowledged the unwavering support of his friends who believed in him and understood his passion for causes. He also recounted his heartbreaking experiences as an obstetrician and gynecologist, serving the wives of Marines who are stationed at Camp Lejeune and bearing witness to devastating condition our wounded servicemen



## AHI GENERAL NEWS

return from battle, which he described as “maimed” and “mentally destroyed.”

Dr. Crist remarked, “You’re in Afghanistan to be a killer and in 37 hours you’re back here trying to adjust to civilization...I’m just trying to explain to you something is happening in our society. I love my government, I fight for my government. There’s not enough resources to take care of these boys...So we have a community problem.”

The honorees’ many accomplishments were celebrated throughout the evening, and highlighted in congratulatory letters submitted to AHI by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Ambassador of Greece to the United States Vassilis Kaskarelis, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the United States Pavlos Anastasiades, World Council of Hellenes Abroad USA Region President Ted G. Spyropoulos, and International Coordinating Committee Justice for Cyprus President Philip Christopher.

**Special guests attending the event included:** Ambassador Kaskarelis, Chairman of the Hellenic Parliament’s National Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee Konstantinos Vrettos, Ambassador Anastasiades, U.S. Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA), former U.S. Ambassador to Greece Tom Miller and Bonnie Miller; and former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korologos.

### **AHI Teams with Smithsonian to Celebrate Cyprus**



*Dr. Alan Simmons.*

As part of the weekend’s festivities AHI hosted a dinner, in cooperation with the National Museum of Natural History, commemorating the Republic of Cyprus at the National Museum of Natural History on March 11, 2011. As part of the evening’s program, the exhibition “Cyprus: Crossroads of Civilization” was showcased.

### **AHI Hosts Book Presentations**

AHI also hosted two book presentations on Saturday morning, March 12. Dimitrios Panagos presented his book “Archbishop Demetrios: The First Decade 1990-2009,” which is a masterful compilation of stunning images from the Ministry of His Eminence’s first ten years. Maria Yanna offered the second book presentation on her first book project “Portraits of Prominent Greeks in the U.S.A.,” which she describes as a unique record of today’s achievers and tomorrow’s legacy.



*(L-R) Maria Yanna, Dimitrios Panagos.*

### **NEW PRESIDENTS ANNOUNCED**

*Continued from page 1*

“The AHI Board of Directors wishes to thank Aleco Haralambides for his dedicated service and commitment to the organization as its president during the past two years,” added Rossides.

As COO, Larigakis continues much of his duties as executive director, a position he has held since 1992. In this capacity, Larigakis has been responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of AHI and its affiliated organizations. He has directed all aspects of strategic planning, policy analysis, public affairs programming, government relations, financial development, and media communications. Larigakis’ responsibilities as executive director also included working with the U.S. Congress on U.S.-Greece-Cyprus relations, where he has provided witness testimony to several congressional committees; and as liaison to the grass roots community, traveling throughout the U.S. to educate the public about AHI’s public policy issues and other aspects of its mission. As a result, he has been interviewed by mainstream, Greek-American, and Greek media outlets on issues affecting U.S. policy in the eastern Mediterranean.

“I am grateful for this exciting opportunity to lead AHI in this new capacity,” said Larigakis. “I look forward to working together as a team to grow our organization through our member programs and informative policy forums as we continue to work to strengthen relations between the United States and Greece and Cyprus.”

### **Dr. Spireas Named AHIF President**

The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) announced the selection of Dr. Spiro Spireas as its president, effective January 1, 2011. Dr. Spireas succeeds AHI Foundation President and AHI Founder Gene Rossides, who will remain on the Foundation’s Board of Directors.

“We are very happy that Dr. Spireas has agreed to serve as president of the AHI Foundation,” said AHI President Nick Larigakis. “He is a visionary leader who will bring a wealth of enthusiasm and talent to the Foundation. Dr. Spireas will

## AHI GENERAL NEWS

be a significant asset to the foundation and will help it meet its mission to the benefit of the Greek American community.”

“The AHI Foundation Board of Directors is deeply grateful to AHI Founder Gene Rossides for his leadership of the Foundation,” stated Larigakis. “Under his direction, the Foundation launched a series of policy conferences, a study-abroad program, started a book publishing program, held a historic conference on Cyprus’s fiftieth anniversary, started the AHIF Online Policy Journal, and initiated the endowment fund.”

AHI Founder Gene Rossides said, “I enjoyed the opportunity to lead the AHI Foundation during a time of growth in new programs. I have tremendous confidence in the abilities of Dr. Spireas to lead the foundation in the years to come, and I wish him the best.”

Dr. Spireas, New Hope, Pa., is the owner, founder, chairman and chief executive officer of Sigmapharm Laboratories, an emerging specialty pharmaceutical company operating out of Bensalem, Pennsylvania, and engaging in the development, manufacture and marketing of unique generic and branded pharmaceutical products. He is the inventor and author of more than 80 international and domestic patents and 200 scientific papers, books, and other publica-

tions in the fields of industrial pharmacy, pharmaceutical technology, biopharmaceutics, pharmacokinetics and analytical chemistry.

Dr. Spireas holds a Master’s and a Doctorate Degree in Pharmaceutics and Industrial Pharmacy from St. John’s University, Jamaica, N.Y., and a B.S. Degree in Pharmacy from the Hellenic National University of Athens, Greece. In addition, Dr. Spireas is very active in the Greek Orthodox Church. He currently serves as the Parish Council President of St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Trenton, N.J., and he is a member of the Metropolitan Council of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey appointed by His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos. On October 30, 2010, Dr. Spireas was installed as an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

“It is a great honor and privilege to be named AHI Foundation president, as well as a huge challenge, to be following in the footsteps of AHI Founder Gene Rossides,” said Dr. Spireas. “I look forward to working with AHI President and COO Nick Larigakis, the AHI Foundation Board of Directors, and staff to augment the Foundation’s reach and to make a difference in the Greek American community.”

## AHI HOSTS SERIES OF “TOWN HALL SCREENINGS”

*Continued from page 1*



*Prof. Van Coufoudakis, Congressman Gus Bilirakis and Nick Larigakis.*

The first town hall screening was held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Clearwater, Fla., Feb. 7, 2011 in cooperation with the church and the Pancyprian Association of Florida. A panel discussion featuring U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, AHI Foundation Chair of Fellows Dr. Van Coufoudakis, and AHI President Nick Larigakis was held. Archon Regional Commander and AHI Member Theodore P. Vlahos, M.D. helped to organize the event.

AHI organized a second screening at New York University in cooperation with the Cyprus Federation of America on Feb. 25, 2011. Former U.S. Congressman and President Emeritus of NYU Dr. John Brademas provided opening remarks. A panel discussion featuring AHI Board of Directors



*Dr. John Brademas, former US Representative and President Emeritus of New York University.*

Secretary Nicholas Karambelas, who contributed to the project, was held. News Anchor and Journalist John Metaxas moderated the discussion. AHI President Larigakis welcomed the audience and thanked Panicos Papanicolaou, president, Cyprus Federation of America. Republic of Cyprus’ Consul Koula Sophianou and Greece’s Consul Evangelos Kyriakides attended.

The screenings resumed in Boardman, Ohio with a showing at St. John the Forerunner, April 4, 2011. The event was held in cooperation with a multitude of organizations, including: St. John the Forerunner Cultural and Heritage Programs, AHEPA Lincoln Chapter 89, Youngstown; AHEPA Zeus Chapter 88, Akron; Daedalus Chapter 4 of the Pan-Ikarian Brotherhood,

Pan Arcadian Federation, Tripolis 9; Manolakakis/Theodorakis Cretan Association, and the Chios Society Agia Markella. A discussion followed featuring AHI President Larigakis, who thanks the supporting organizations and AHEPA Chapter 89 President Jim Denney.

At time of press, a series of town hall screenings were being held on the West Coast in the cities of Sacramento, the San Francisco bay area, and Los Angeles, April 27-29, 2011.

The documentary aired on Detroit Public Television on September 13, 2010. It was made possible by the support of the AHI Foundation.

### MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

## ADVANCING HELLENISM'S CULTURAL LEGACY THROUGH ART

By *Chrysoula Economopoulos*



*Euripides "Rip" Kastaris.*

Euripides "Rip" Kastaris' has blazed a trail as an internationally recognized artist for over 25 years. He draws from his Hellenic and Orthodox Christian heritage as a major source of inspiration for his works of contemporary art.

Kastaris was born in Greece, and he is the son of a Greek Orthodox priest. His father's mission brought his family to the United States at an early age, settling in St. Louis where he resided for

most of his life. Kastaris began his career as designer and commercial illustrator. Asked what inspired him to branch out and dedicate himself full-time as an artist, he credits his need to seek a sense of purpose and passion in his vocation.

"One of the greatest factors in longevity is a sense of purpose," says Kastaris. "It gives us focus when we have passion and it does fire the flames so you can really bulldoze and steam through."

Kastaris was first invited to display his work in Greece alongside the work of other Greek artists. This first set of fine art was called "Doric Temples," and the paintings sold very well. So Kastaris began juggling two careers—one in the office, the other in the studio. In addition to his passion, the overwhelming reception his artwork received provided the impetus to dedicate himself fully to art.

"I got a lot of encouragement about doing things that were rooted in my own culture and history, and at that point, I was

already working 90 hours a week doing commercial art. So I had to make a decision to really cool my jets and get in the back of the line of something I had never done, which was show my work at galleries and go to trade shows," Kastaris recalls.

Never looking back, he underscores, "I feel strongly about this. You only have one life, and if you feel called to go into some area, most people give up on themselves way too quickly."

Talking about his artistic inspiration, Kastaris points to an ability to quiet his judgments about what he is going to paint and "allow the real spirit of what's going on to crystallize and come through me...I want not to limit myself to what was done in the past."

While much of Kastaris' work is Greek-inspired, he does not seek to replicate past glories of the heritage, but rather continue to evolve and supplement the body of cultural work with his own new interpretations and inspirations.

Kastaris' principle is to "...try to be as universal as possible because what's great about all Greek history and mythology is that the ancients did not teach their children about how to be great Greeks. They taught them how to be authentic human beings."

Kastaris' other new-found passion is to plant the seed for creating a Byzantine iconography chair:

"There's no place, not only in the United States, there's no place in the entire western hemisphere where you can go to a four-year degree college, art school, or university and become a Byzantine iconographer," Kastaris points out. The challenge? "We have the money and resources, except that we're asleep to it. We don't know the treasure that we have and that it's all dying out."

Kastaris is perhaps best known for two important works of art. First, the landmark "Kyklos—Circle of Glory" mural that was commissioned by the Hellenic Cultural Foundation and which permanently adorns the inside of the Athens Olympic Stadium's VIP Salon. The mural, presented to the City of Athens and the people of Greece, honors the return of the Olympic Games to Athens in 2004.

In cooperation with long-time colleague Michael Eckhard, Kastaris recently completed a monumental mural painted on the side of a building in Alton, Ill., a historic river town just north of St. Louis. It depicts the "Alton Steamboat Landing," and stands as a colorful landmark that aims to revitalize the local community. Approximately 1 million drivers are expected to pass by the mural annually.

Add to this commissions for official artwork produced for the Salt Lake City 2002, Athens 2004, Torino 2006 and Beijing 2008 Olympiads, the restoration of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in St. Louis, and his more recent commissions for Byzantine icons for Orthodox sanctuaries and private collections, it quickly becomes apparent that Kastaris is a creative tour de force.

To learn more about Rip Kastaris and view his artwork, visit [www.kastaris.com](http://www.kastaris.com).

### THE FASHION WORLD'S KARMA QUEEN

By Chrysoula Economopoulos



Elle Sakellis.

September 11th was a pivotal event in American history with an especially traumatic impact on those who experienced that fateful day first-hand. For Elle Sakellis, a native Brooklynite who narrowly escaped the collapse of New York's Twin Towers, it was a life-changing day. But every dark event has the potential to incite change for the better should a person choose to turn crisis into opportunity. Sakellis is one of these people.

She started her career in finance, working at various prominent investment banks over the course of several years. "It was good work, it was challenging work, however I didn't love what I was doing," she recalls. "I was really good at what I was doing, but I just knew in my heart that this wasn't what I wanted to do but yet I didn't really know what the next step was going to be."

Then September 11th happened after which Sakellis entered a period of self-reflection. Leaving the financial world, she spent a few months in her summer home in Mykonos making jewelry for family and friends as a cathartic exercise. She returned to the U.S. and decided to enter the fashion industry, working for Mark Ecko, French Connection, and even doing wealth management for rap artist 50 Cent.

Sakellis's big break came with Victoria's Secret. Her jewelry making drew this major brand's attention, resulting in the order of thousands of units. It was a tall order, yet Sakellis's resourcefulness helped her meet the order which ultimately opened the door for future success.

With the Victoria's Secret name behind her, Sakellis could contact other catalogues to begin marketing her private label products. "When it got to the point that my orders and my client base were growing exponentially month over month, it was very evident that it was time to leave French Connection and start my own business," she says.

Otrera came to life in 2004 producing private label jewelry. Sakellis's Greek heritage played a prominent role in this entrepreneurial venture on several levels. First, her company is eponymous with the Greek warrior goddess and immortal mother of the Amazons, known for her astounding beauty and prowess.

### SAVE THE DATE! 10th Annual Future of Hellenism Conference

November 18-19, 2011

The Capital Hilton • Washington, DC

Although Otrera began with jewelry, the company made its name through its signature evil eye scarf. Sakellis recounts a summer day in Mykonos when she walked into a shop with her grandmother and saw a wall of evil eye talismans assembled on a wall. "I don't know why, but I just stopped and looked and thought, wow, this is really beautiful. It would look really cool in a print," she says of the inspiration for her blockbuster accessory.

Back in New York, Sakellis worked with a graphic artist to bring the concept to life on paper. Once the scarf was produced, a friend ran it in Elle Magazine. The scarf exploded in popularity worldwide. Most notably it graced the storefront of luxury department store Barneys New York.

Otrera's next big hit was the Hamsa scarf, a good luck charm popular in the Middle East and North Africa. Thus Otrera developed its brand as a good luck company, earning Sakellis the nickname "the Karma Queen."

As time went on, she also started receiving calls from designers who did not know how to actually produce their own collections—ranging from shoes to handbags to baby stroller covers. Now these designers are her clients and Sakellis sources their collections from different countries.

What's next for Sakellis? She explains the evil eye will always be in her collection in some way. The fall season will welcome the Evil Eye Pointillism Scarf in a new fabrication. She also notes that Otrera's next launch will be a beach line including swimwear. "Prints would be amazing in skirts and pants for the beach," she says.

Following a philosophy of emanating positive energy into the universe, listening to your gut instinct and following your passion, this fashion goddess is a living example that good karma begets more good karma in spades.

To view Elle Sakellis's creations, visit the Otrera website at [www.otrera.com](http://www.otrera.com).

© 2011 AHI Report. All Rights Reserved.  
Published by the American Hellenic Institute, Inc.

**Membership Information:** 1-800-424-9607  
**Contributing Editors:** Nick Larigakis  
Chrysoula Economopoulos

#### American Hellenic Institute

1220 16th Street, NW • Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: 202-785-8430 • 800-424-9607

Fax: 202-785-5178 • E-mail: [info@ahiworl.org](mailto:info@ahiworl.org)  
Visit us on the Web at <http://www.ahiworl.org>