

***"Heritage Weekend" Brings Together Hellenic 'Influencers'***  
*National Hellenic Society creating a sea-change in philanthropy*  
By Terry Poulos



From left: NHS Chairman George Marcus, Ambassador John Negroponte, and NHS Executive Director Art Dimopoulos

There are many good reasons a record 350 prominent Greek Americans traversed the globe to attend the exclusive, annual National Hellenic Society (NHS) "Heritage Weekend and Classic" retreat, held October 6-9 at the JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort & Spa in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Crossing an ocean to join festivities was Princess Tatiana of Denmark and Greece, joining such notable weekend speakers and presenters such as Congresswoman Dina Titus; Ambassador John Negroponte; Ambassador Patrick Theros; HBO President

of Miniseries and CINEMAX Programming Kary Antholis; NFL Hall of Fame Coach and philhellene Marv Levy; former NFL supervisor of officials and current ESPN officiating analyst Jim Daopoulos; ultramarathon runner Dean Karnazes; Vice President of Race & Sports Operations at Stations Casinos Art Manteris; co-authors of "The Archimedes Codex" Dr. William Noel and Dr. Reviel Netz; and several academicians, scientists, physicians, and more. The weekend was topped off with a concert by one of Greece's top singers, Thanos Petrelis, and his band.

The three-day event is an offshoot of the "Telly Savalas Golf Open." Heritage Weekend repurposed what the effervescent Savalas began in the 1980s with his cult of a personality and charisma. The NHS distinguishes itself by offering not only entertainment, golf, à-la-carte activities such as race-car driving, hiking, desert tours, and water sports, but also educational and cultural enticements that prominent Hellenic and philhellene influencers gravitate toward. Such influencers include public servants, business owners, scientists, educators, journalists, authors, and entertainers - all under one roof.



Greece's Thanos Petrelis engaged the enthusiastic audience.

Now in its eighth year with seven chapters in seven cities, the NHS is both efficient and productive. It operates with a modest 20-percent administration cost, thanks to its generous benefactors and growing membership. But there is something much more subtle, yet intriguing, occurring here. Something that goes beyond sheer money and supporting worthy causes. 'Doing charity,' so to speak, in a casual and fun atmosphere, with many opportunities over the three days to interact in spontaneous face-to-face conversations, opposed to the standard one-night

loud musical dinner gala, fosters many opportunities to exchange thought capital and allow the “right hand to know what the left hand” is doing. Heritage Weekend was brilliantly orchestrated by the NHS’ founders.



NHS members competing during the Telly Savalas Memorial Tournament and Classic. From left: George Behrakis, Angelo Tsakopoulos, Dr. George Korkos, and Tim Joannides

A 501(c) 3 tax-exempt foundation, the NHS was founded by several individuals concerned about the complacency of the Greek American community drifting away given demographic realities: NHS Chairman, George Marcus (founder of Marcus and Millichap (MMI) and Essex Properties (ESS), George Behrakis, George Stamas, Dr. George Korkos, John Payiavlas, and several others. They developed a new model for a Greek organization that they thought was needed, a non-competitive entity that served multiple roles, as venture capitalist and thought engine. For their Executive Director, the NHS turned to Modern Greek art - Beltway attorney Art Dimopoulos, that is.

The NHS’ mission statement reads: "to create a lasting network of Greek Americans that will preserve our heritage through the sponsorship and initiation of programs that support our Hellenic culture; benefit our members and their families; and honor our ancestors." Additionally, it strives for "perpetuation of those values and ideals that are embodied within the Hellenic heritage - classical ideas associated with ancient Greek democracy including the pursuit of knowledge, education, the arts and civic responsibility."

Classical studies in general have been cut across the board by universities and other institutions in America during the past half century. There is a critical need to fill that void, or eventually this slippery slope will drain knowledge of humanity's past. This is a price no one, Greek or otherwise, can afford.

With that, the NHS hit a bonanza in 2016. NHS served as a co-sponsor of the recent, critically-acclaimed miniseries documentary, *The Greeks*, which aired this past summer on PBS stations across the nation and was produced in conjunction with National Geographic *Television*. The miniseries was viewed by millions. *The Greeks* is a companion to the incredible exhibit, *The Greeks: Agamemnon to Alexander the Great*, which was first hosted at the Field Museum in Chicago and then traveled to the National Geographic Museum in the summer. It featured nearly 600 artifacts from 22 museums in Greece that covered a 5,000 year timespan of ancient Greek history. This exhibition was made possible through the largess and philanthropy of NHS member, John Calamos, Chair of the National Hellenic Museum.

The NHS and National Geographic Television also co-produced *The Greek Guide to Greatness*. This digital online series was inspired and developed by the NHS. It distinguishes the influence

that ancient Greece has had on the shaping of America. *The Greek Guide to Greatness* highlights the lasting impact of the ancient Greek world within the context and prism of modern society. It has been recognized as being wildly successful in conveying to the mainstream audience how the ancient Greeks led a thorough explosion that reverberated throughout the west and led eventually to the very creation of America itself.

Among many, the NHS' signature initiative is the "Heritage Greece" program, a "two week cultural educational immersion odyssey for accomplished Greek American college students" hosted at the American College of Greece (ACG) in Athens. The Program gives these students



Heritage Greece Program alumni join NHS members for their annual alumni reunion

the opportunity to travel to Greece and spend time learning the language and about Greek culture alongside a peer group of exceptional students from ACG. They visit historical sites to witness and learn first-hand the history of our ancestors, which allows them to become closer to their roots and what it means to be Greek. Heritage Weekend also hosted a reunion to 52 Heritage Greece alumni. The NHS continues to play a role in their lives as mentors, engaging them to be involved with the NHS at the local and national level through the Heritage Greece Alumni Network. NHS members have helped students land internships, jobs, and

provide mentorship and career advice while the students stay engaged with NHS and its programs.

The NHS also developed the "Heritage America Program," which is sponsored in conjunction with leading DC public affairs firm, Manatos & Manatos. The Program introduces students to a "who's who of Greek American decision-makers, business leaders, and other important contacts who will serve as future mentors and career guides for Heritage America alumni."

The NHS has taken a larger role in recent years in supporting the National Hellenic Museum (NHM) located in Chicago, and the NHS and NHM co-developed exhibit, *Spirit of the Marathon*, was displayed during Heritage Weekend in the lobby of the plush JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort & Spa – right after it was prominently on display at the Greek festival hosted by St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church of Las Vegas. Over



*Spirit of the Marathon* exhibit on display for Heritage Weekend attendees to view and enjoy

60,000 visitors were treated to a history of the marathon from its ancient roots to modern day marathon events.

The NHS developed MyParea.com, an online social network website for Greeks that now has an average of 150,000+ weekly, unique visits, as well as the HellenicCareerCenter.com job board to connect Greek American employers and jobseekers.

The 2016 Heritage Weekend and Classic must be considered the finest and most extensive event since its inception. That is high praise as many prominent figures have graced NHS events, including 2015 Heritage Weekend headliner, famous A&E television *Mindfreak* illusionist Criss Angel, a proud Hellene who is a regular at the Luxor Hotel & Casino on the Las Vegas strip. This year, the committee brought in the notables mentioned at the outset, in addition to additional panel presenters and speakers, such as pharmaceutical pioneer George Behrakis; Dr. Panos Anastasiadis of Mayo Clinic; cyber intelligence expert Panos Anastasiadis; CEO of the University of Virginia's Miller Center William Antholis; Dr. John Camp, the lead archeologist of the world Heritage Site Agora excavations at the Acropolis; Editor in Chief of *Washington Monthly* magazine and former speechwriter for President Clinton, Paul Glastiris; Dr. Stamatios M. Krimigis, Emeritus Director of the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Center where he led efforts for Voyager 1, Voyager 2 and has been involved with every unmanned space flight over nearly half a century; Elizabeth Lee of the non-profit CyArk international heritage site virtual reality simulations; former National Geographic Director of Specials and Emmy Award winner, Jared Lipworth; Emeritus Director of USAID and Director of the Scowcroft Institute at Texas A&M, Andrew Natsios; leading pollster, David Paleologos of Suffolk University Political Research Center; and John Gumas, president of SF Bay Area-based Gumas Advertising, whose clients include the San Francisco Giants and 49ers.

Heritage Weekend attendees included Americas at Google President Margo Georgiadis; DOW/Dupont Chemical Chairman/CEO Andrew Liveris; Calamos Investments Chairman John Calamos; Calamos Investments CEO John Koudounis; FOX5 DC news reporter Laura Evans; CBS New York radio broadcaster and *Bloomberg Business* reporter John Metaxas; and San Francisco *Bay Area News Group* columnist Frosene Phillips.

George Behrakis, brothers William and Kary Antholis, and actor John Aniston were honored at Heritage Weekend with portraits painted by artist Euripides "Rip" Kastaris. The portraits will be inducted into the permanent collection of the Greek American story at the National Hellenic Museum. For more information, visit [www.hellenicsociety.org](http://www.hellenicsociety.org)



NHS honoree portraits to be donated and inducted in the permanent collection at the National Hellenic Museum in Chicago,