

GAHOA Awards Scholarships

The Greek American Homeowners Association of Astoria (GAHOA), the second largest organization of its kind in New York state, was founded 30 years ago by Dennis Syntilas, who was its president for seven years. GAHOA activism has improved the quality of life in the community, working with the 114th Police Precinct and local politicians. There is another unique achievement of this growing, dynamic organization: its unique college scholarship program.

"We came to this country with nothing. We did something. We have to give back to persons not as lucky as us," George Alexiou, GAHOA outgoing president, who will be succeeded by George Kitsios, and who has devoted 12 years of his life to the betterment of his community, maintains. "Many persons work hard and live honorable lives and do not succeed. Fate determines one's life. When I needed help, no one helped me. I want to make life easier for our students and give them opportunities that were not given to me in my youth."

On January 3, the GAHOA held its annual Vasilopita and, along with George Fakiris, a philanthropist, awarded \$4,500 in scholarships to students attending Queens College and St. John's University and donated \$6,000 for the establishment of a Queens

College Chair for Byzantine Studies. Dr. Christos Ioannides, director of the Byzantine Studies Center, accepted \$3,000 from the GAHOA and \$3,000 from Fakiris. The 2007 college scholars each received \$250 from the organization and \$250 from Fakiris. In addition, the book *Gates of Fire*, based on the Battle of Thermopylae, was given to each scholar. The scholarship winners are Eleni Christoforou, Queens College, and Louis Marinou, Irene Nysiriou, Diamanto Ktenas, Irene Zouroudis, Alexandra Gialaboukis, Nicholas Angelopoulos, Vanessa Petrakis and Maryanne Karahalis, all St. John's University students. Professor Catherine Tsounis and Dr. John G. Siolas are instructors in the St. John's University Modern Greek Language and Literature Program.

"Congratulations on your academic achievement," Kitsios told the students. "You are [each] an outstanding student with exceptional abilities. The Greek-American Homeowners Association and Mr. George Fakiris are attempting to perpetuate the Hellenic language and culture through symbolic scholarships. Our organization has been awarding scholarships to St. John's University students since April 2002. We have seen your Modern Greek Program expand to include students of all backgrounds who appreciate



The 2007 Greek American Homeowners Association scholars.

Scholar Alexandra Gialaboukis presents an Appreciation Award to outgoing GAHOA President George Alexiou (c.) as 2007 President George Kitsios (l.) and the Rev. Apostolos Koufallakis (r.) look on.

Hellenism. We are committed to perpetuating the Modern Greek language and culture in America."

Kitsios added that each scholar "displays all aspects of being a strong student and a good citizen of St. John's University, Queens College and the Community of New York City. We wish you success on all your future projects."