

New Smyrna Beach, FL - Daytona Speedway Chapter 410 of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) has designated 2015 as the year to raise awareness of the 500 Greek colonists, who arrived in America in 1768 as indentured servants to establish the New Smyrna plantation. Theirs is the first footprint in creating today's New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

Chapter 410 was instrumental in the formation and funding of the New Smyrna Odyssey Memorial, located in New Smyrna's Riverside Park. The project, which became an AHEPA National Project, was dedicated in 2004. On Saturday, August 29th, Chapter 410 Chaplain, Father Joseph Samaan, continued the tradition of celebrating the end of summer memorial and commemorated the souls of those early settlers. Father Samaan is presiding priest of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Daytona Beach and a trustee of the St Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine in Saint Augustine, Florida.

AHEPA is committed to supporting educational opportunities for youth locally and nationally. Earlier this year, Ahepans committed \$800 to the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine Essay Contest. This annual competition challenges high school students to compare the story of the early New Smyrna colonists with an immigrant story of a family member or friend. **Ahepan** Ted Baledes of Volusia County encourages all to learn of the rich Hellenic immigration history here in America.

AHEPA and the Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project (MPCPMP) made history when they joined together at the 2015 annual memorial. The civic ceremony included a proclamation read by New Smyrna Beach Mayor Jim Hathaway and a declaration read by Ann Chinn, Executive Director of MPCPMP. Both remembered and honored the souls of those 1,402 persons who crossed the Atlantic in **1768**. New Smyrna Beach is one of the 175 middle passage ports for fifty nations of North, Central, and South America, the Caribbean and Europe. A marker was erected to remind us that truth brings healing as the traditional interpretation of an era in United States history that is wrought with shame, anger, denial and guilt is reconstructed. This rectification of history is part of AHEPA's mission to establish historical

accuracy and perspectives while integrating historical information into existing institutions and organizations.

Judge John Alexander, who is of Greek and Minorcan descent, led the program. Father Joseph Samaan offered prayers for continued healing. Dr. John Symeonides, president of Chapter 410 thanked everyone for their commitment to history. Poxeni Maouris Hillier, director of St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine, shared that during her research of Dr. Andrew Turnbull's final years in Charleston, South Carolina, she learned that over 800 slave ships arrived in that city between the early 1700's and 1858. On one ship, only 4,020 of the 6,000 people on board survived the voyage. Of the 1402 Greeks, Italians, Minorcans and Corsicans to leave the Mahon in 1758, 291 perished at sea. According to a website of the African Holocaust, 13,700,000 slaves perished on the journey to the New World between 1718 and 1858. Among the bones that mark the Atlantic Ocean's Middle Passage are those of our people. May their memory be eternal.

On August 24th, St. Augustine Mayor, Nancy Shaver, read a city proclamation at the commissioners' meeting underscoring the significant impact the survivors of the New Smyrna Colony continue to have on the city's region and culture. On September 4 and 5, Greek Landing Day will be celebrated in conjunction with the City of St. Augustine's commemoration of their 450th birthday.