

2015 National Shrine Essay Contest Winners Announced

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(St Augustine, FL, January 11) – On behalf of the St Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine Essay Contest program, Katherine Bacalis is pleased to announce the winners of the Eleventh Annual National Shrine Essay Contest. High school students compared the immigrant story of a family member with the immigrant story of the Greeks who arrived in America with the Turnbull expedition in 1768.

Florentina Sergiou, parishioner of St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Toms River, NJ placed first; Joshua Graziani of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Southgate, MI placed second; and Victoria Martine of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Carmel, IN placed third.

The St Photios Foundation Board of Trustees joins the Essay Committee members in offering congratulations to the students, their parents and their parishes. First VP Archon Dr. Manuel N Tissura expressed his gratitude to Mrs. Kate D ‘Anna and AHEPA Speedway Chapter 410 for their financial support of the program. “It is one of the few ways to connect with high school students across the country. The Essay contest gets our kids thinking about early Greek Immigration to America and the history of their own families.”

Mrs. Bacalis expressed deep appreciation to essay judges Dr. Eleni Derke, Dr. Constantine Santos and Stathis Xynidis and committee members Dr. Tony Tsitos and Renee Gahagan for the time and resources they bring to this valuable program.

Florentina Sergiou underscored the mission of the Essay program in her essay summary: “I learned a lot from writing this essay. I never knew that some of the first Greek immigrants came over in the 1700’s. I always thought that it wasn’t until Ellis Island opened that there were Greeks in America. When you think about it, our culture has been broadcasted throughout the nation for almost 250 years, we still follow our religious traditions, teach our children to speak, read and write the language and learn the dances and music and so much more.”

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