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NEWS

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TO GENERATIONS OF  
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## Bon Voyage to American Community Schools of Athens Graduates

By Constantine S. Sirigos

**ATHENS** – Eighty talented and enthusiastic children from Greece and throughout the world, the Seniors of the Academy, the high school of the American Community Schools of Athens Greece, were auspiciously launched into adulthood in a graduation ceremony filled with nostalgia, hope, and most of all, the love of their families, friends, and teachers on June 14.

The delightful gathering where 19 different nationalities were represented by the students was spiced by musical performances by graduates and punctuated with brief and inspiring greetings and presentations by students, faculty, and Board Members, including ACS President Dr. Stefanos Gialamas, ACS Vice President Peggy Pelonis, whose emotions were magnified by the graduation of her own daughter, Lydia Pinirou, noted builder and Philanthropist Suheil Sabbagh, and Academy Principal Anthony Vandarakis.

Salutorian Ester Pyykko spoke of her appreciation for her classmates and teachers and Valedictorian Maria Pyrgiotti ex-



pressed her love for fellow graduates by enthusiastically sharing some of the wisdom she gained during her studies at ACS through well-chosen and beautifully expressed quotes and ideas.

With the U.S. Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey R. Pyatt – who is a strong supporter of ACS – in the United States for important meetings between American and Greek officials, the U.S. Embassy was represented by its

Charge d’Affairs, James K. Stiegler. Born and raised in Cincinnati, OH, he also addressed the students and wished them the very best.

Pelonis also recognized the School’s retirees and the Parent Teachers Organization. Several speakers noted that one of the keys to the schools ongoing and growing success is the contributions of the parents and the excellent cooperation between them and faculty and staff.

Sabbagh, during his comments, thanked and congratulated Dr. Gialamas for the vision, leadership, and energy he has displayed working with the ACS team during his 11-year tenure, which has substantially elevated the school’s stature.

Odysseos Digbassanis, the son of Apostolos Digbassanis, past Counselor for Economic & Commercial Affairs and the Greek Consulate in New York, was among the honorees, re-

ceiving the international Baccalaureate CAS (creativity, activity, service) award and the Principal’s Award for Leadership, which recognizes overall ability.

The commencement address was offered by Dr. Kevin J. Ruth, Chief Executive of ECIS, the Educational Collaborative for International Schools, followed by the noble and emotional tasks at hand: the recognition of students with awards and thanks

Most of the ACS Athens commencement speeches were short and sweet, but the graduates of the school with students from 62 countries couldn’t wait to toss their caps.

to benefactors of scholarships – including those offered to students from Greece generously funded by Sabbagh, whose own children attend ACS – and culminating in the Calling of the Roll by Senior Class Vice President Qizhe (Ethan) Tang and the awarding of diplomas by Dr. Gialamas, Sabbagh, and Vandarakis.

Founded in 1946, ACS, a pre-K through 12 private school located in the Athens northern suburb of Halandri, is described in its Mission Statement as “a student-centered international school, embracing American educational philosophy, principles and values.”

ACS’s distinguished faculty and energetic staff are devoted to the students, and empowering them “to transform the world as architects of their own learning,” in the words of its slogan, and “to thrive as responsible global citizens.”