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AHEPA hosts History Tournament, Anna Rezan and her movie “My People”



PHILADELPHIA, PA -

The root of the saying “twice as nice” hails from Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher of the Classical period. On February 19, 2024, AHEPA Chapter 69 and the Daughters of Penelope Nike #230 of Cherry Hill, NJ opened up their doors to the community for its own version of Plato’s Academy of Hellenism to the Delaware Valley and beyond.

AHEPA globally has for years hosted this tournament in various districts around the world. The tournament tests high school teams sponsored by AHEPA chapters in Hellenic History in three distinct categories: Ancient, Byzantine and Modern Hellenic History. The “Jeopardy” style tournament encourages our young adults to learn our history. Scholarship monies are provided to the winning team as well as a smaller amount to the runner up team. Thereafter the winners of each of these AHEPA tournaments globally participate in a championship, usually at its Supreme Convention, for even more scholarship monies and for the right to be crowned champion.

In the morning, high school students from all over New Jersey, Philadelphia and Delaware came to see and participate in the annual AHEPA Hellenic History Tournament. The tournament held for years here at the Danielle Kousoulis Center at Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church was hosted by the local chapters and also by the AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope District 5 lodges. The lodges came out in full swing to support the ten teams from across the area. AHEPA 5 Governor John Koninis and Daughters District 5 Governor Kelly Papachristos welcomed the various high school teams to the tournament over an introductory breakfast opening session. Hellenic History tournament chair Steve Marmarou and AHEPA director of Education Cosmas Diamantis set forth the tournament rules and revealed the first - round draws.

AHEPA Supreme Governor Demetrios Rozanitis welcomed the crowd which included the families of participants and observers. On behalf of AHEPA Supreme President

Savas Tsivicos, he noted that that last year's winning team participated in the AHEPA Global finals at the Supreme Convention in Las Vegas and came in second and that the previous year's AHEPA Global champion team came from this tournament as well. He thanked the major sponsors of the event for providing assistance with the sponsorship monies, particularly the Rentschler Foundation through a grant made possible by Ahepan and local church President Tassos Efstratiades as well as the AHEPA District 5 lodge.

The championship was played on the imposing large theater screen that was set up for the upcoming movie premier. The winning team, like all teams, had selected a Hellenic based name, the all-female team was "The Aphrodites" sponsored by AHEPA's Garden State chapter in Holmdel, NJ. They will go on to compete in AHEPA's global final this upcoming summer.

The students and their families were treated to a special guest appearance from Anna Rezan. The Delaware Valley premiere of her film "My People" was set to be played later in the evening upon the conclusion of the tournament. Anna literally came straight from Greece, stopping in before the evening program to address the students. She gave an impassioned speech, congratulating them for competing, not forgetting their roots and encouraged the participants to dream big while wishing them success and happiness.

Widely known as an actress, a musician, and a high fashion model, the multi-talented Anna Rezan shared her feature documentary debut. The film is produced by her, Zaf Haitidis and Academy Award winners Mitchel Block & Kim Magnusson. "My People" is up for an Academy Award Oscar nomination. Executive Producer Victor Restis, Grand Sponsor Bella Restis and the Macias Restis Foundation were thanked for making the production of the film possible.

Speaking of the Philadelphia Premiere of "My People" with the personal appearance of Anna Rezan, the Danielle Kousoulis Hall was transformed as the evening event was getting started. The crowd for the evening event filed in and all told approximately 700 people came in to participate and witness the events combined.

"My People" is the story of the Greek Jews during the Holocaust, the Axis occupation, the Greek resistance and the role of the Greek Orthodox clergy. "My People" is a hymn to love and courage as it is discovered by a young woman in her quest to uncover her Greek Jewish family's history. Anna's groundbreaking film on the Holocaust and the suffering of Greek Jews wove first hand accounts, footage and her interviews of many in search of her roots. The story also highlights relatively unknown and untold significant historical facts of the era with a

groundbreaking outlook to the Christian Clergy. It was all that and more.

Upon conclusion of the showing of “My People”, Ms. Rezan took the stage to a standing ovation. She was met there by George Horiates who congratulated her, stating AHEPA pays tribute as annually its leadership delegation along with leaders from major Jewish American organizations visit Israel’s World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Yad Vashem. Turning to Anna, he thanked her for granting this unique program to the community, suggesting to the attendees that if they wish to have additional showings of “My People” in either the Greek and Jewish communities to reach out to her for showings.

She opened up the floor for a question-and-answer session. The Presiding Priest of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church, the V. Rev. Archimandrite Augustinos Psomas welcomed Anna to the community and he thanked AHEPA for promoting this important and outstanding program. He was joined by members of Philadelphia’s considerable diplomatic corps led by Honorary Consul of Panama in Philadelphia, Georgia Athanasopoulos. Georgia congratulated Ms. Rezan on her work and introduced the large contingent of Philadelphia’s Jewish attendees that came for the show.

Amongst them was Moshe Matsa of Philadelphia. Mr. Matsa was in fact a Greek Jew holocaust survivor. Moshe thanked AHEPA and the amazing story of “My People” by Anna Rezan while telling heartfelt parts of his own story. He weaved his remarks and accounts in English and in Greek to the crowd. There was not a dry eye in the hall.

Photo: AHEPA

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