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“Women of Vision, Principle, Industry, and True Philanthropy”: Daughters of Penelope Continue Long Tradition of “Salute to Women” Award



On Thursday, July 21, the Daughters of Penelope hosted the “Salute to Women” Award Ceremony, honoring Janet E. Petro, the Director of NASA’s John F. Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Petro previously served as the Center’s Deputy Director, during which time she helped Kennedy transition into a multi-user spaceport, leading cross-agency initiatives with the Federal Aviation Administration and U.S. Air Force to streamline government processes and support commercial space operations to increase government efficiency and limit redundancy. Petro is the 28th recipient of the “SALUTE” Award.

Held biannually during the AHEPA Supreme Convention, the Salute to Women recognizes an outstanding woman outside of the organization who represents the goals and ideals of the Daughters of Penelope. In fact, in the 1960s— just thirty years after the organization’s 1929 founding in San Francisco— the Daughters had already proven to be a dynamic force in their Greek and local communities, as well

as in the broader Diaspora and in Greece. It was then that past Grand Presidents Joanna Panagopoulos Merakos and Betty Athanaskos conceived of the “SALUTE” Award as a way not only to recognize the outstanding achievements of women, but to affirm the place of the Daughters of Penelope as a National and International Women’s Philanthropic Organization.

In his remarks at the Awards Ceremony, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros recognized this legacy in Petro and in every member of the organization: “Allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to every single Daughter of Penelope. In honoring this exceptionally skilled professional and truly talented leader, you honor yourselves as: women of vision, women of principle, women of industry and women of true philanthropy. All of the qualities and characteristics that you single out this evening for your current honoree apply to all those women who came before her.” (Full Remarks.)

Also present at this year’s ceremony was Her Excellency Alexandra Papadopoulou, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the United States. Grand President Kathy Bizoukas, as well as Committee Chairman Joanne Booras and Committee Members Celia Kachmarski and Demi Thomas also offered remarks.

Today, fifty years after Senator Margaret E. Chase received the first “SALUTE” Award in 1970, and almost one hundred years since the organization first began its work, the Daughters of Penelope are leaders in philanthropic, education and cultural activities, with Chapters in the United States, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Greece, Cyprus, England, France, and Germany. Their mission and outreach are non-partisan and non-denominational—and their efforts are constantly growing.

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