

Soterios Ellenas School: A Legacy of Greek Education and Community



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Dr. Anastasios Koularmanis, Director of the Department of Greek Education, will be releasing a series of articles that center on Greek Education, with a particular emphasis on spotlighting several Day-Schools.

The Soterios Ellenas School, also known as SES, was a beacon of Greek education and community in the heart of Brooklyn from 1966 to 2005. Founded by the Greek Orthodox Community of Kimisis Brooklyn, the school's journey was marked by dedication, generosity, and a commitment to preserving Greek culture and language.

The roots of the Kimisis Brooklyn community can be traced back to 1931 when it was initially known as the Greek Orthodox Community of Bay Ridge. Over the years, the parish underwent several relocations before finally settling at its current location on 224 18th street. In 1937, the Archdiocese of North and South America officially recognized Kimisis Theotokou Greek Orthodox Community as a parish, solidifying its position within the Greek Orthodox Church.

As the 1960s approached, the Kimisis community took on a new responsibility - the creation of a Parochial School. Father Titus Siligardakis, a devoted clergy member, played a pivotal role in guiding the project. However, the realization of the school's establishment would not have been possible without the generous contribution of Mr. Soterios Ellenas, a well-respected restaurateur within the community. In honor of his significant donation, the school was aptly named the Soterios Ellenas Parochial School.

In 1966, with the support of the community and the benevolence of Mr. Ellenas, the Greek-American School opened its doors to fifty-four eager students. From its inception, the school aimed to provide a nurturing and culturally rich educational environment.

In 1970, Father Titus was appointed to a higher position as Metropolitan of Rethimnos and Avlopotamou, Crete. His departure brought Father Evdokimos

Kokkinakis to assume the role of the new priest of the Kimisis parish and school. That same year, the community garnered recognition for its excellence in youth ministry, particularly its scouting program, which had been established in the 1960s.

As the years passed, the school expanded, adding a new wing and a library during the mid-1980s. These developments aimed to enhance the learning experience for the growing number of students and to further promote Greek culture and language.

Despite its initial success, SES experienced a decline in enrollment over time. Eventually, the board decided that establishing a charter school would be a viable solution. In 2005, the school grounds were leased to the Hellenic Classical Greek Charter School (HCCS), the first elementary charter school to offer the Greek language in the Metropolitan Area.

Despite its closure, SES had left an indelible mark on the community and laid the foundation for the success of HCCS. The Hellenic Classical Greek Charter School continues to thrive, offering a culturally rich education that includes teaching the Greek language to hundreds of children from various cultural backgrounds.

While the Soterios Ellenas School may no longer exist in physical form, its legacy lives on through the Hellenic Classical Greek Charter School. Both schools shared a common goal – to preserve and promote Greek culture, language, and community. Today, the HCCS continues to grow and expand, fostering an inclusive and nurturing learning environment for its students, transcending cultural boundaries.

As the Hellenic Classical Greek Charter School embraces the future with its ongoing expansion and educational endeavors, it remains a testament to the enduring spirit and vision of the Soterios Ellenas School and the Greek Orthodox Community of Kimisis Brooklyn. The story of these schools exemplifies the power of community support and the lasting impact of investing in education and cultural heritage.

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