

The Well

"We want to live well, but our foremost efforts should be to help others live well."

-1 Corinthians 10:224

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**ST. IAKOVOS
RETREAT CENTER**

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President's Message

2023 was a banner year for the St. Iakovos Retreat Center! Thank you for your gifts, prayers, support, and advocacy in promoting our mission and guest stays.

The St. Iakovos Retreat Center hosted 2,578 guests in 2023. Of that total, 1,694 people were part of Metropolis-related events, with 952 people from Fanari Camps. The total number of groups visiting us in 2023 was 45. This represents a growth of 7.4% over last year in the number of people served, and 66.7% growth in the number of groups coming onto our campus.

The Retreat Center installed the personally inscribed brick pavers made possible by our donors as part of our 15th Anniversary recognition and celebration. The chapel patio and cottage sidewalk are the locations of our first installments. They beautify and personalize our "home" on the campus.



Among several firsts, we received our first endowment, held our first concert event fundraiser with a sold-out show, and supportive sponsorships. Our first Women's Advocacy Group was initiated. They have written their mission statement, held their first event, and gathered for their first official volunteer event to decorate the main lodge for the holidays. We received several naming opportunities this past year and welcomed two new board members.

We are grateful for your faithful support. Your gifts have made a difference in the lives of children and adults, bearing witness to our faith, and sharing love and hospitality with the people we serve. Welcome to 2024 and the first edition for our new look! The bible verse reminds us all to not only live well ourselves, but to always strive to help others to live well through faith, hospitality, service and community.

May God bless you and your family,

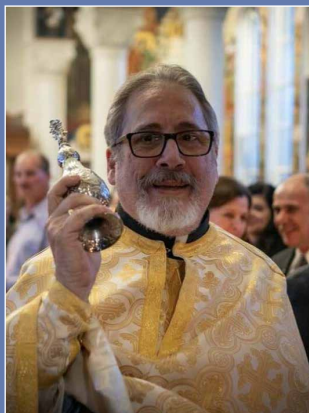
Paul

Paul Loupakos, President
St. Iakovos Retreat Center



In Memoriam

Fr. Stephen
Bithos



The St. Iakovos Retreat Center community mourns the loss of beloved Fr. Stephen Bithos who has fallen asleep to the Lord. We extend our sincere condolences to Presvytera Pearlann and the rest of his family. Fr. Stephen's compassion, attentiveness, and caring for each individual is a testament to his spiritual and human compassion for everyone he encountered.

Fr. Stephen was also a dedicated, enthusiastic and valued board member for the Retreat Center and he will be greatly missed. May his memory be eternal!

Welcome New Board Members

We are thrilled to welcome **Mr. Steve Theofanous** and **Maria Dasakis-Costopoulos** to the board of St. Iakovos Retreat Center!



Steve Theofanous was born in Nicosia Cyprus. He immigrated with his family to Chicago in 1969. He married his wife Maria at the age of 20. They have three daughters, three wonderful sons-in-law and four grandchildren. Steve has devoted himself to his faith, his family, his business, and service to the community.

He has served as president of the Chicago Cypriot Community from 1995 to the present. He has served as president of the McHenry County College Foundation, president of the McHenry County Restaurant Association, served on the board of the Illinois Restaurant Association and currently serves as chairman of the board of the Greek American Restaurant Cooperative (GARC) and is a board member of the philanthropic organization GARA. Steve is a successful businessman who has owns and operates Around the Clock Restaurant and Bakery in Crystal Lake IL, with his brother since 1983, and they are partners in one of the largest independently owned property groups in McHenry County.

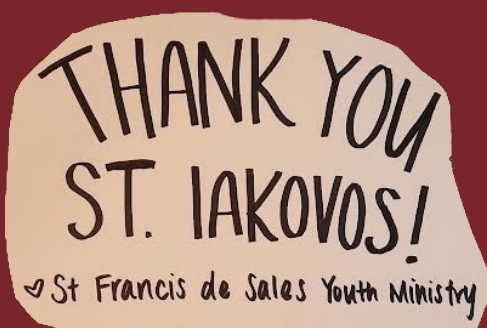
Steve and his wife Maria are stewards of St. Sophia Greek Orthodox church in Elgin, Illinois. We look forward to Steve sharing his vast experience and his consummate professionalism with our board!

Maria Dasakis-Costopoulos, a native of Chicago, has spent over twenty years living in Europe, primarily in Athens, Greece. Having graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in Finance, she has extensive experience in hedging precious metals markets, commercial banking, and directing McDonald's-Canada Happy Meal Toy Division, all before moving to Europe. While in Europe, along with her husband, she founded a medical device distribution company, importing and distributing cutting-edge medical devices throughout Europe, the Middle East, South Africa, and South America.



Beyond her professional pursuits, Maria is deeply committed to the Greek Orthodox community and its advancement. Raised in the Assumption Greek Orthodox community of Chicago, she developed early on a dedication to supporting the community. Upon returning from Europe, she served over 3 years on the parish board of St. Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church. Maria is dedicated to our core values of faith, hospitality, service, and community. We are so excited to have her on our board, and her talents and expertise are already impacting our organization.

Group Stays/Guest Visits



This Winter Season, we've hosted several group retreats, some for the first time! The St. Francis de Sales Catholic Parish in Lake Zurich enjoyed our facilities for a youth event. A group from Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Chicago lodged with us during their ski trip in January, and Loyola Chicago conducted one of their annual events with about 17 participants!



Donor Spotlight

We recently received the custom designed ADA-accessible golf cart through a donation from The American Hellenic Progressive Association (AHEPA), District 13 Lodge Daughters of Penelope, and Pete Lekas.

This much-needed mode of transportation will enable our guests with different abilities to enjoy access to our various buildings on the property more efficiently and safely. It comes complete with an extended riding area, ramps, and secure railings to allow for wheel-chair accessible entry to the vehicle.

We would like to extend our thanks to our donors, as well as board member Chris Atsaves' leadership, in making this specialized golf cart possible.



We thank the Greek American Restaurant Association, and the Greek American Restaurant Cooperative, and their amazing members, for their partnership and generous gift of \$50,000.

Steve Theofanous, GARC, Jayne McGrath SIRC,
and Sam Markos, GARA.

Event News

Vasilopita Celebration



On Sunday January 14, members of the Retreat Center board attended the Metropolis of Chicago's 63rd Annual Vasilopita Celebration held at the Holy Taxiarchai-St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church in Niles. To honor the feast day of St. Basil, His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael distributed Vasilopita slices to the various groups and organizations of the Metropolis. Our dedicated Director, Arun, and two of our board members, Tom Kotsinis and Peggy Papaioannou, attended the service and accepted the Vasilopita on behalf of the Retreat Center!



Save the Date



The Retreat Center will be hosting a Bright Friday Celebration on May 10th, 2024! This will include Orthos, followed by Divine Liturgy, and a Luncheon in our Tomaras Lodge. Invitations will go out via email in April and information will be available on our website. Please make sure to RSVP.

Grounds and Facilities



The St. Iakovos Retreat Center celebrated the joy and blessings of the past holiday season surrounded by Christmas trees and twinkling lights. Our thanks goes out to our Board members, HHH Friends of the SIRC, and the staff who spread their cheer by decorating our Tomaras Lodge. Special recognition goes to Elaine Katzioris, Marion Karras, and Wanita Loupakos for coordinating design and donating decor! We appreciate your generosity, and huge dedication of time, to beautify our spaces for all visitors and staff.

Personalized Legacy Bricks Installed

Our first installment of the 15th Anniversary Legacy Bricks have been placed. The two locations are the chapel patio pavers and the Farlekas Cottage location. It has beautified and personalized these two areas and we are grateful to all those who participated and to God for giving us such a special entry to our Life Giving Spring Chapel.

We will celebrate the official unveiling (viewing) at the Bright Friday services this Spring on May 10th. Come and look for your personalized brick!



New Improvements



We are doing some preparation for upcoming summer camp with sports field maintenance and post winter road repairs.

