

CHAPTER #517 AHEPAN OF THE YEAR DINNER  
By Dimitri Dimitriades

On Sunday, March 11, AHEPA's Holmdel, NJ Chapter #517 held its annual Ahepan of the Year award dinner at Lou Cas Restaurant (Edison, NJ) and this year's George Karatzia was shining as his family, friends and fraternal brothers showered him with well deserved praise and honor.

George Karatzia emulates what it means to be an AHEPAN. Throughout his tenure he leads with conviction, passion and love of what he stands for. One of his most recent achievements is spearheading the AHEPA Service Dogs for Warriors project to the National level and already raising over \$100,000 for its cause helping veterans suffering from PTSD.



Demetri Ofanitopoulos, President of Chapter #517 hosted the evening and noted that a dog was named in his honor and although the actual dog couldn't make an appearance he presented him with a plush dog "George" to remind him of his achievement. Good wishes came from across the country as far as California where Wynn Storton, AHEPA webmaster sent his good wishes via Steve Bontales. Pictured are (from Left) Steve Bontales, George Karatzia & Demetri Ofanitopoulos

With a crowd of almost 100 attendees many rose to the occasion and spoke about George's contributions not only to AHEPA, but to his Church, Family, and Community. A nostalgic moment was when a fellow Vietnam Veteran, James Barnett - Commander of Disabled American Veterans of Freehold (shown in picture with George) shared war stories of their time together in Vietnam and how much George has been a Godsend to the veterans of their organization.



Other presenters included Greg Ploussas, Mike & Mary Loizou, Ted Vittas, PDG & Phil Vogis, PDG (pictured), and several family members including



his brother Harry Karatzia who encouraged everyone to rise and give George a group hug with a big "AHHH" at the end. His daughter Christina & granddaughter Alana also shared wonderful stories of how George shaped their lives and influenced their success (George proudly standing with his grandchildren)

George humbly accepted his honor by noting that he is merely a piece of the puzzle and acknowledged the help and devotion that everyone devotes to his projects and how he couldn't do it without their help. This may be true but without his leadership, foresight and actions we know it couldn't have been done without him.

Everyone had a wonderful time at the event and not only were their hearts fulfilled to honor such a worthy gentleman, their stomachs enjoyed a wonderful meal hosted by Lou Cas Restaurant in Edison, NJ that provided a feast fit for a King!



George seated (center) with his Brothers of Holmdel Chapter #517