PAUL POLITIS
YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE MONTH
DECEMBER 2017

"EMBRACING CHURCH MINISTRIES"

Photo Credit:
Konstantine Ouranitsas

Philo4Thought Hellenic Professional Mentoring Initiative is pleased to present our December Young Professional of the Month! The goal of our publications is to provide positive, successful role models who will inspire the next generation of young professionals. Preliminary criteria for YPM candidates is that they are actively engaged in an entrepreneurial initiative or have made a successful career for themselves, thereby serving as strong role models to the next generation of young professionals. Candidates are typically of Hellenic origin and part of a humanitarian (educational, sociological, scientific, etc.) or environmentally-conscious field. Given the gradual expansion of our readership, we currently interview candidates who embrace a specific Hellenic philosophy best described in a word… *Philotimo (φιλότιμο)*. The most important qualifications all our candidates share are the spirit and compassion to persevere, and the heart to share their knowledge and experience with others.

This month's YPM, Paul T. Politis, has been a proactive member of the Annunciation Church Young Professionals Group for many years. He is also well-known for his philanthropic work in the nonprofit sector as an administrator in the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry ([www.theocpm.org)](www.theocpm.org), where he works diligently to help others make concrete progress towards daily improvement in their lives. We are honored to share his story with you today.

THE JOURNEY & "AHA" MOMENT:

Born and raised in the Bronx, Paul describes himself as "A Fordham Ram through and through," having attended both the Fordham Preparatory School and Fordham University, from which he graduated in 2008 with a B.S. in Business Administration. His academic concentrations were in Finance and Information Technology made him a perfect fit for the position of Regional Director at the Catholic Archdiocese of New York, where Paul was hired immediately after graduation. As Regional Director Paul managed annual campaigns across various parishes within the Archdiocese's jurisdiction, including fundraising initiatives for over 120+ parishes throughout greater New York, helping to raise over $5 million over his three years of service in that position.

Following this valuable experience with the Archdiocese, Paul pursued a Masters of Public Administration (MPA) in the Austin W. Marxe School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College, where he specialized in Non-Profit Administration. This combination of academic training and professional experience is what shaped Paul's vision and drive to make a permanent career for himself in the Non-Profit sector. With this in mind, Paul applied for and was hired as this Director of Operations for the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) promptly after graduation.

The OCPM is an Agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, whose mission is, "To bring the love of Christ to those who are in prison by providing encouragement, material support, transition and reintegration guidance, Christian education, spiritual guidance and the sacramental life of the Church." As Director of Operations, Paul oversees OCPM's daily operations, manages their finances, development and marketing, donor relations, and more. Under Paul's managerial guidance over the past three years, the OCPM has grown from a small ministry that not many knew existed to an initiative that has gained national recognition

and support. Paul of course, is humble in mentioning the degree of effort that has gone into this major accomplishment. "I will continue to expand the mission of OCPM to all those incarcerated nationwide."

When asked what inspired him to follow his current professional interest, Paul says, "What inspired me was when I was working for the Catholic Church. After a year of being Regional Director, I realized I had really enjoyed my work, but what truly inspired me was the fact that I had the opportunity to help communities in different counties and make a difference in so many people's lives. Other paths I had considered were law, finance, and business, but my current career path allows me to help a centralized community, and the individuals affected by it. Being in the Non-Profit industry and working towards a mission that help those who are in need, provides a sense of purpose and existence in life."

PHILOSOPHY:

In work and in life Paul is known for his sincere and hard-working nature. "Most of my upbringing has been inspired by being a member of the Hellenic community. My parents and grandparents were immigrants [from Athens and Kavala] seeking a better life for their families, which is achievable through hard work and honesty. My philosophy was instilled by my family and my life experiences, and they are simple words: loyalty, diligence, and sincerity. These words helped shape my professional and personal strength in so many ways. My philosophy provides a sense of knowing myself, and, in turn, makes me a trustworthy, accountable, and reliable individual."

The determination to make a lasting positive and productive impact in his administrative and philanthropic work is a major part of Paul's work ethic. "My career is very important to me. I dedicate a great deal to it, not only for myself, but also to make a positive difference in the world."

In terms of balancing work and life, Paul says it's just a matter of practice. "You just need to learn and establish a time to work and a time to relax. Once you figure out your own routine, practice makes perfect."

MENTORS:

When asked who his favorite mentors have been, Paul says that he has several. "My favorite mentors would be my parents, my high school history teacher, Mr. Bozzone, my grandmother Kalliroe, and my older sister Dana. Each has guided me through many difficult life decisions and helped to make me the person I am today.

CHALLENGES:

Paul mentions two major challenges related to working in the non-profit: The lack of "presence" of nonprofits in central, mainstream networks and the skepticism nonprofits face from the world at large. "Networking is important, but I feel that at many of the networking events I've attended, the non-profit sector is under-represented, and that needs to change…. The most difficult challenge that I face as a professional is convincing the public to support a great cause. Skepticism is a great adversary and trying to get people involved in a mission can be challenging. To overcome this, you must educate and demonstrate that your mission is viable and that there is a need for it to be accomplished."

DOWN-TIME:

In his spare time Paul is an avid fan of automotive racing and the automotive industry in general. He also enjoys cross training and preparing for the annual Reebok Spartan Race. He also helps with various fundraisers, sharing his professional knowledge and experience with organizations dedicated to serving communities in need. He is also an active member of the Annunciation Church Young Professionals Group and co-Chairs with his younger sister Chloe Politis to coordinate their annual Mistletoe Gala every December at The Harvard Club of New York.

WORDS OF WISDOM:

Paul has several words of wisdom for today's young professionals:

- Education is key and whatever you learned up till this point is somehow useful. Life can be unpredictable like that, but always remember, nothing is set in stone.
- A quote from my favorite author, Dr. Seuss: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose."

MENTORING:

Paul is willing to serve as a *Philo4Thought* mentor to younger members of the Hellenic community. Thanks, Paul!

READERSHIP: While the primary readership is the young Hellenic professional of New York, we are very pleased that our online exposure has caused our targeted readership to shift beyond this scope! Young professionals of all communities and origins are welcome to contribute comments and questions!