

# ΧΡΥΣΗ ΓΕΦΥΡΑ GOLDEN BRIDGE

newsletter

## in this issue

*Archbishop Elpidophoros  
visits Ionian Village*

*Celebrate the Feast Day of  
Saint Dionysios*

*2023 Photos & Reflections*

*Cooking with  
Kyria Sophia*



IONIAN  
VILLAGE

FALL 2023







## ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE

### From His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Dear Alumni of Ionian Village,

My heart fills with deep emotion when recalling my first official visit to the beautiful grounds of Ionian Village for the camp's golden anniversary. It was not just a visit; it was a pilgrimage, a journey of spiritual connection with the young souls who have found — and continue to find — joy and fulfillment within the friendly embrace of IV. Every conversation, every prayer, every hymn shared with the campers and staff left an indelible mark on my heart. And to witness firsthand the very passion and devotion with which each individual embraces the teachings and traditions of our Orthodox faith was truly uplifting.

Of course, Ionian Village's legacy is not just about the passage of time, but about the countless hearts touched, spirits lifted and minds enlightened. In celebrating the camp's 50th anniversary, there was an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride reverberating throughout. Reflecting upon the countless lives transformed over the decades, and witnessing the ripples of faith and fellowship that have extended far and wide, served as a vivid testament to IV's enduring mission. Your jubilant festivities, shared memories and steadfast resolve to continue carrying forth the torch of faith and culture are truly remarkable and inspiring.

And so, as we joyfully revisit the program's fifty-year history, we also set our sights forward on the horizon, envisioning a future where Ionian Village continues to flourish, guide and nurture the spiritual journeys of campers still to come. May all of you carry with you the pleasant memories of the lifelong bonds of friendship and camaraderie that you forged during your years at IV, and with a renewed spirit of enthusiasm and commitment continue to support and share the special mission of Ionian Village for many, many more years.

With much paternal love in Christ.

Archbishop of America



## A Message from the Director of Ionian Village

Dear IV Family,

I hope this newsletter finds you well as we head into the cooler months. I'm thrilled to write to you upon returning from a successful 2023 summer season.

We recently wrapped up our summer camp sessions and are still reeling from the campers' energy and the staff's dedication. As we all know, the memories made during these sessions were the kind that last a lifetime—friendships, personal and spiritual growth, and a deeper connection to Christ. Seeing how our programs transformed these young souls reminded me of the incredible legacy we carry forward.

Looking ahead, we have exciting events in the works, including a renewed IV On-the-Go program, our annual summer reunion, and a few alumni events! All of the information for these can be found in this magazine.

Our alumni are the heartbeat of Ionian Village. I'm throwing the doors wide open for each of you to jump back in and reconnect. Your presence and involvement enrich our community and keep inspiring generations. It's everything that makes Ionian Village special—unity, growth, and community.

Thank you for your constant support, dedication, and contributions – for making our camp what it is! I'm looking forward to the new and rekindled connections that await.

**Marina Floratos**  
Director of Ionian Village

*Opposite: His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros during an Agiasmo Service at the Chapel during his historic visit to Ionian Village this past summer.*

*Above: Marina officially welcomes His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros to Ionian Village.*



## in this issue

- |           |  |   |           |  |   |
|-----------|--|---|-----------|--|---|
| <b>6</b>  |  | Introducing Give the Gift of Ionian Village                         | <b>13</b> |  | Archbishop Elpidophoros Visits Ionian Village |
| <b>8</b>  |  | Summer Wish List  | <b>14</b> |  | Summer Reflections & Photos                   |
| <b>10</b> |  | Celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Dionysios across the United States | <b>19</b> |  | Cooking with Kyria Sophia: Ravani             |
| <b>12</b> |  | Thank you to our 2023 Staff Members                                 | <b>20</b> |  | Alumni Connections                            |

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## CONNECT TO IONIAN VILLAGE

*A collection of ways to include Ionian Village in your life*

Follow Ionian Village on social media:

[Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

[Donate to Ionian Village](#) via our Give the Gift Scholarship Program or our 2024 Wish List

Schedule an [IV On-the-Go](#) for your community

Visit [Ionian Village destinations](#) while you are in Greece

Officially join our online alumni network at [www.ionianvillage.org/alumni](http://www.ionianvillage.org/alumni)



# ΧΡΥΣΗ ΓΕΦΥΡΑ

# GOLDEN BRIDGE

newsletter

## Why the “Golden Bridge?”

For over 50 years, thousands of campers, staff, and clergy have passed through the historic gates of Ionian Village, fulfilling Archbishop Iakovos’ dream of establishing a “Golden Bridge” of Orthodoxy and Hellenism between America and Greece.

The goal of the Golden Bridge Newsletter is to connect all of us that were blessed to be a part of the Ionian Village experience.

### AN EXCERPT FROM “Η ΧΡΥΣΗ ΓΕΦΥΡΑ”

By Τάκης Γαζουλέας, Αθήνα 1992

“The castles of the historic triangle: Corinth – Mystra – Chlemoutsi, stand today as monuments of a glorious history of centuries past. The “castle” of Ionian Village stands tall, raising the children, boys and girls, of the Greeks living in America and bridges both the physical distance between the old and the New World, as much as the spiritual and emotional distance experienced by the Greeks living abroad, and by their children. With this idea as inspiration, His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos characterized the camp as a “golden bridge,” strengthening the bond between Mother Greece and her children, the Diaspora, in America.”



“Τα κάστρα του ιστορικού τριγώνου: Κόρινθος – Μυστράς – Χλεμούτσι, ορθώνονται σήμερα, μνημεία μιάς μακραίωνης ένδοξης ιστορίας. Το κάστρο του Ιονικού Χωριού ορθώνει πανύψηλα τα παιδιά, αγόρια και κορίτσια, των Ελλήνων της Αμερικής και γεφυρώνει τόσο την απόσταση από τον παλιό μέχρι τον Νέο Κόσμο, όσο και το ψυχικό κενό των ξενητεμένων Ελλήνων και των παιδιών τους. Γι’ αυτό και ο Σεβασμιότατος Αρχιεπίσκοπος κ. Ιάκωβος χαρακτήρισε τις κατασκηνώσεις σαν χρυσή γέφυρα μεταξύ της Μητέρας Ελλάδος και των παιδιών της, της Διασποράς, στην Αμερική.”

give the gift of

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# IONIAN VILLAGE

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## INTRODUCING

*a scholarship program that will  
afford more young people from across  
our Archdiocese the opportunity to  
participate in Ionian Village's  
life-transforming ministries.*

As we are all aware, the cost of living, and especially the cost of travel has risen exponentially. While we work continuously with the Archdiocese to bring down the cost of participating in Ionian Village, as airfare and travel costs are at an all-time high, the cost of running the program has risen.

We recognize that increasing costs make it difficult for many families to send their children to Ionian Village. It is our hope that with your help, we can continue to offer the unparalleled experience of Ionian Village to as many young people as possible, even for those for whom the opportunity is financially out of reach.

With this goal in mind, we are inviting you to participate in our reimagined scholarship initiative: "Give the Gift of Ionian Village." By committing to sponsoring a scholarship, either individually, as a family, as a group, or on behalf of your parish community, you will not only provide a young person the chance to experience the "faith and friendships that last a lifetime" which are an integral part of Ionian Village, but you will be strengthening our entire Greek Orthodox Community in America. Ionian Village campers return home with strengthened faith and a greater appreciation for our Church and our Greek culture. They return rejuvenated, excited and invigorated to carry our traditions to the next generation.

*To learn more and sponsor a Give the Gift of Ionian Village Scholarship,  
please visit [www.ionianvillage.org/donate](http://www.ionianvillage.org/donate)*





STEP ON GREEK LAND,  
SWIM IN GREEK WATER.

EXPERIENCE REAL GREECE.

IV NEXT  
JUNE 6 - JUNE 17

SESSION ONE  
JUNE 25 - JULY 14

SESSION TWO  
JULY 23 - AUGUST 11

SUMMER STAFF  
JUNE 17 - AUGUST 16

REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 1ST AT 11 AM ET  
STAFF APPLICATIONS OPEN DECEMBER 17TH

**2024**

IONIAN VILLAGE



# IONIAN VILLAGE

## *wish list*

A summer at Ionian Village demands a lot of behind-the-scenes effort. We know that for many, it's a unique opportunity, and we aim to make every camp moment meaningful and ensure our Glyfa home is welcoming and beautiful. With your support, we can better achieve our goal of providing an exceptional Ionian Village experience for our campers.

We kindly ask for your consideration of a donation in these areas to help create a magical Ionian Village summer.

To donate an item from our wish list, visit [www.ionianvillage.org/donate](http://www.ionianvillage.org/donate) or visit our [Amazon Wish List](#)





## GENERAL CAMP SUPPLIES

- Staff washing machines (\$550, 3 desired)
- Apothiki large capacity washing machine (\$1300)
- Amphitheater Decal (\$150)
- Flags for the flagpoles (\$200)

## PROGRAM SUPPLIES

- Arts & Crafts Supplies (\$500)
- Supplemental Orthodox Life Chairs (\$400)
- Chapel Books (\$2200)
- Travel Chapel Books (\$800)
- Sunday Liturgy Books (\$2200)
- Staff Apparel (\$3700)
- Candles for the Chapel for the summer (\$300)
- Saint Dionysios icon cards (\$500)
- Communion Wine for the Summer (\$150)
- OL Journals & Pens (\$500)
- Equip the Lifeguards: fanny packs, lifeguard t-shirts, emergency kits, buoys (\$300)
- Office Supplies (\$500)
- Infirmary Supplies (\$500)

## CAMP MAINTENANCE

- Cleaning & whitewashing Chapel, Amphitheater and other areas of camp as needed (\$5,250)
- Cleaning walkways around camp (\$850)
- Fans in the Outdoor Chapel (\$1,000)

## IONIAN VILLAGE FARM

- Garden – expand & replant (\$600)
- Donkeys (\$500 each, 2 desired)
- Care for a donkey for one year – includes vaccinations, care and food (\$700, multiple desired)
- Goats (\$100 each, 2 desired)
- Care for a goat for one year – includes vaccinations, care and food (\$350, multiple desired)
- General maintenance of peacock/bird enclosures (\$500)

## AMAZON WISH LIST

An online list with items specific to the summer programs that can be purchased and donated directly.



# CELEBRATE THE FEAST DAY OF SAINT DIONYSIOS

In a revitalized effort to connect with our alumni and strengthen our connections, we are coming to you! This December, we invite you to join us across the country to celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Dionysios as an Ionian Village family.

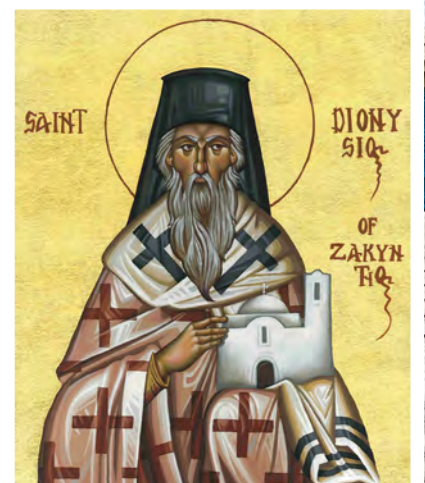
We hope that you will join us this year, and every year, along with your family and friends to reconnect, remember your time at Ionian Village, and honor the Saint.



## **SAINT DIONYSIOS OF ZAKYNTHOS**

Feast Day December 17

The son of Zakynthos, the prelate of Aegina, and the protector of the Monastery of Strofadon, with one voice all we the faithful honor you, Dionysios, and cry out to you. By your prayers, save those who keep your memorial and who proclaim about you: "Glory to Christ Who glorified you, glory to Him who made you wondrous, glory to Him who made you our unsleeping intercessor."





# BOSTON

Sunday, December 17, 2023  
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy  
Fellowship to follow

Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church  
57 Brown Street, Weston, MA 02493

# CHICAGO

Sunday, December 17, 2023  
9:30 AM Liturgy & Artoklasia  
Fellowship to follow

Saint George Greek Orthodox Church  
2701 N. Sheffield Ave, Chicago, IL 60614

# HOUSTON

Saturday, December 16, 2023  
5:00 PM Vespers  
Dinner and discussion to follow

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral  
3511 Yoakum Blvd. Houston, TX 77006

# LOS ANGELES

Saturday, December 16, 2023  
6:00 PM Vespers  
Dinner and Christmas Party to follow

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral  
1324 S. Normandie Ave, Los Angeles, CA

# NEW YORK

Saturday, December 16, 2023  
6:00 PM Vespers

Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Paul  
110 Cathedral Avenue, Hempstead, NY

If your community would like to host a celebration, please let us know by e-mailing [ionianvillage@goarch.org](mailto:ionianvillage@goarch.org)

As the patron saint of forgiveness, having helped his brother's murderer in a moment of personal sorrow and despair, Saint Dionysios offers an example of the fullness of Christ's love that we so often try to comprehend. As we visit Zakynthos each summer, our campers and staff are reminded, through Saint Dionysios, just how powerful God's love is for us. We are reminded that each of us has shortcomings and that each of us has made mistakes, but that no mistake is too great if we open our hearts to forgiveness. This connection to our faith and to God is strengthened further as we then venerate the body of the Saint and are able to experience his presence. Our trips to Zakynthos and the miracles and stories of Saint Dionysios are so central to the Ionian Village experience that his Apolytikion is chanted as part of every Chapel Service during the summer as we pray for his intercession and protection.

This summer, the Saint again made his presence felt at camp. In the evening, after a cloudy and overcast visit to Zakynthos, the Staff gathered in the Chapel for a Paraklesis service to pray for the campers that were getting ready to leave America for their journey to Ionian Village. When the service was completed, the Staff members noticed a series of wet footprints that started from just outside the Chapel and ended at the Proskinitarion dedicated to the Saint that stands facing the beach and the island of Zakynthos. There was a beautiful and unmistakably calming fragrance of myrrh. Despite the summer sun, the footprints never dried and are still visible along the walkway.







# THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 SUMMER STAFF!

They gave their energy, long hours, and endless love to our campers to ensure that they had life-changing experiences. Putting others before themselves every day is part of the staff experience, and this group embodied that.

Thank you for your hard work and for serving the Ionian Village program with your whole hearts!







## ARCHBISHOP ELPIDOPHOROS OF AMERICA MAKES FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO IONIAN VILLAGE FOR 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America marked Ionian Village's 50th anniversary with a joyous visit. After a warm welcome to Glyfa from IV Director Ms. Marina Floratos, His Eminence shared fond memories with long-serving IV families, and shared his vision for the camp's future.

On Friday, July 21, His Eminence visited the campgrounds, where he was greeted by applause from campers, staff, and clergy as he entered the camp. The remainder of the day reflected the rich history and lively ongoing relationship between Ionian Village and the broader community in the region as he visited local leaders.

The highlight of the visit was the evening program, which commenced with an Agiasmo service at the Chapel. Following the service, Archbishop Elpidophoros and other invited guests joined campers and staff in the Amphitheater to participate in the beginning of the regularly scheduled evening activity "Greek Invasion," which included a performance of traditional Greek dancing.

At a celebratory dinner hosted on the lawn in front of the Chapel, US Ambassador to Greece George Tsunis, who was once a camper, expressed his love for IV. His Eminence reflected on the generations of Greek Orthodox campers who have travelled from the United States and passed through the gates of Ionian Village transformed. He expressed his deep honor in undertaking this inaugural visit to Ionian Village and reaffirmed his support for its continued success in nurturing the next generation of Greek Orthodox leaders.



*"These young people have come not just for a summer camp, but to travel and witness the real beauty and treasures of Greece. They came to savor the food, to learn the language, to experience the Greek lifestyle, to swim in the Greek sea. Most importantly, they came here to learn about the Orthodox faith, which they have done not only by being here but also by traveling and visiting the monasteries and churches of the region—venerating the relics of so many important Saints of our Church.*

*These saints, such as Dionysios, Mammas, Gerasimos, Nektarios, Andrew, Loukas, and many more, are no longer mere stories of people who lived long ago; they are now true realities in the lives of these young people. These memories and experiences are cherished and kept for the rest of their lives."*

*– His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, reflecting on Ionian Village at a celebratory dinner honoring 50 years*

# SUMMER reflections

“Every once in a while, I look back in my camera roll to look through the hundreds of pictures I took in Greece during my time at IV Next. Not only did I learn about Greek culture and the Orthodox faith, but I made lifelong friendships along the way. Some of my favorite people I learned about were Saint Dionysios and Saint Gerasimos. I loved visiting Zakynthos, Patras, and Athens the most. And, of course, the food and the geography of Greece was amazing. For my first time out of the country, IV Next exceeded any expectations I had beforehand, and I hope to visit more of Greece again soon!

GRANT KOPAN  
TOLEDO, OHIO  
IV NEXT



“Ionian Village is the closest thing that I have ever felt to being a part of something divine. Back in the normal world, my understanding and gratitude for what Ionian Village is and what it does for its campers has deepened. I can only hope that you continue to help as many more people as possible on their spiritual journey and that IV stays true to the promise of its purpose - making Orthodoxy a way of being.”

SIMOS DIMAS  
SESSION 1



“Ionian Village truly gave me the best summer of my life. I’ve always been very faithful and strong in the Orthodox life but IV truly gave me the confidence in myself. I feel closer to my religion than ever before - not just with the saints we visited but the people and culture. My best friends are the ones I made at camp and I wouldn’t trade my experience for anything. I have my icons in my dorm room and every time I see them, I’m reminded how eternally grateful I am for IV.”

MIA CICINELLI  
SESSION 1

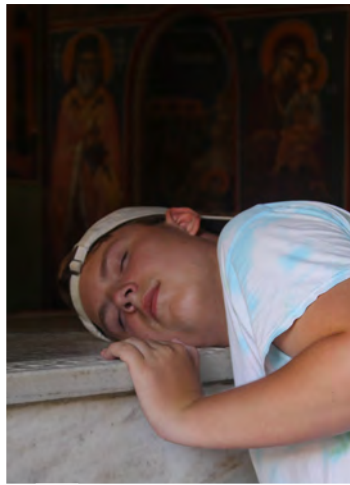


*“These are the  
moments  
we live for!”*





# IONIAN VILLAGE 2023





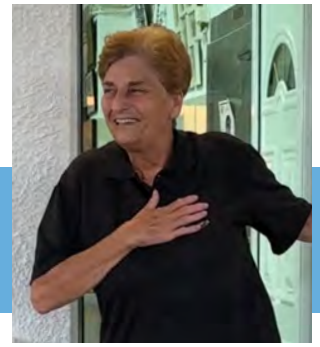




# cooking with kyria sophia

## RAVANI

A fluffy aromatic cake drenched with syrup. One lucky camper celebrated her birthday with Kyria Sophia's ravani!



## INGREDIENTS

### for the ravani:

12 eggs, separated  
500 g sugar (2 1/4 cups)  
500 g semolina, fine (2 3/4 cups)  
1/8 cup ouzo  
4 tsp baking powder  
3 tsp vanilla extract  
zest from one lemon

### for the syrup:

1 kilo sugar (4 cups)  
1 liter water (4 cups)  
juice from half a lemon

### for garnish:

slivered almonds or candied  
cherries

## DIRECTIONS

1. Make the syrup. Combine the sugar, water and lemon juice over low to medium heat, stirring gently until sugar is completely dissolved so it does not burn. When the syrup comes to a boil, allow to boil gently for 5 minutes, then remove from heat and let it cool.
2. In a large bowl, beat the egg whites to meringue consistency: beat slowly for about 1-2 minutes, then at higher speed until glossy and soft peaks form. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, combine egg yolks and sugar and beat until combined and the mixture lightens in color.
4. To the bowl with the egg yolks and sugar mixture, gently fold in egg white meringue and semolina a little at a time, alternating additions, until combined.
5. In a small cup, mix the baking powder into the ouzo, then gently fold into the batter together with the vanilla and the lemon zest.
6. Lightly grease a 3" deep baking pan (approx 10" x 15" or use 2 8-9" round pans) with oil and sprinkle lightly with semolina. Pour in the mixture and bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes.
7. When the ravani is ready, remove from the oven and gently spoon the cooled syrup on top. It will drink the syrup a little at a time. Allow the ravani to cool to room temperature before serving. Garnish pieces of ravani with slivered or sliced or candied cherries, if desired.

# καλή επιτυχία. good success!

*This is often translated as "good luck" in English, but "επιτυχία" actually means success. We know your ravani will be perfect!*



# ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

Life updates, exciting moments, proud achievements and more from our network of Ionian Village Alumni!



“Tony and I got married on September 30th! We went as campers the same summer in 2012 (different sessions) and came back as Staff in 2016!”

*Maria Benson & Tony Gallanis*

IV 2012 (Campers), IV 2016 (Staff)

“After meeting each other 10 years ago at IV as campers in 2013, we survived long distance for 5 years, we have moved 3 times together, have 2 pups and are married for 2 and a half years now. We can’t thank IV enough for the life we’ve been able to create together.”

*Elenna and Aleko Kontos*

IV 2013 (Campers)

“I recently graduated with my MSN and RN from DePaul and will be starting a nurse position at Rush hospital in Chicago on October.”

*Marina Efsthiau*

IV 2016 (Camper), IV Next 2018, IV 2019 (Staff)

“I went to IV in 2013, now I’m a Financial Advisor in Fort Lauderdale for Northwestern Mutual.”

*Demetri Limperopoulos*

IV 2013 (Camper)



“Published my book, *The Trade Me Project*, and was on the Ellen Show after trading a single bobby pin until I got a house!”

[Watch Demi on the Ellen Show](#)

*Demi Skipper*

IV 2007 (Camper)

"I attended IV 2014 and it's something I still talk about today! Now I'm married, and our son was born in July. We attend Holy Trinity in Dallas and I can't wait for him to go to IV someday."

*Lauren Clayton*

IV 2014 (Camper)

"Getting my Doctor of Nursing Practice at VCU so I can do research to improve the care of people with Type 1 Diabetes."

*Eva Katsaros*

IV 2007 (Camper), IV 2016 (Staff)

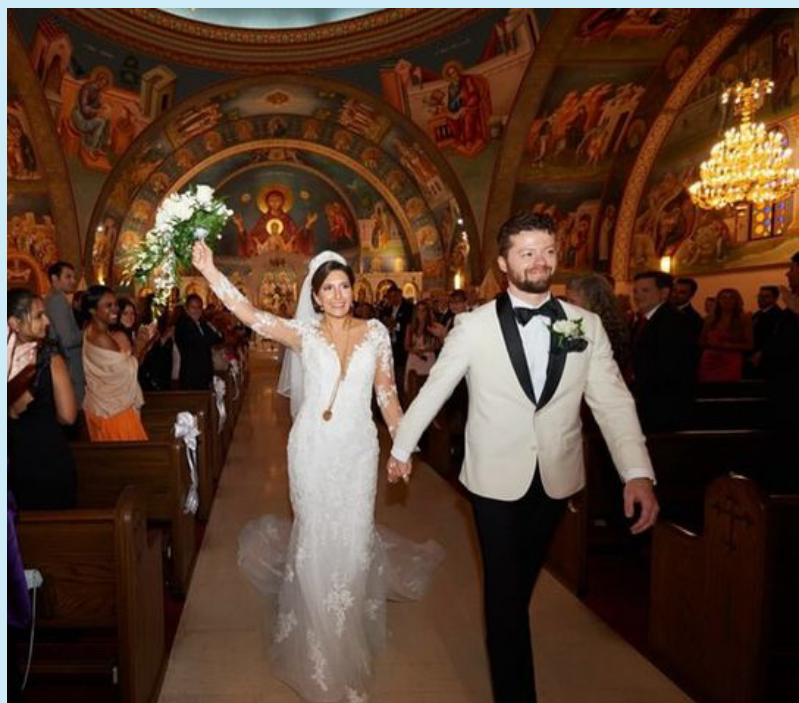
"I loved my time at IV (I believe it was the summer of 1996.) I can't wait to send my daughter some day!! When I mention to people who aren't Greek Orthodox about IV they find it fascinating."

I wish when I was in my 20s or early 30s, I had a job that would've allowed me to be a counselor. I worked in production and definitely couldn't take that much time off in a row.

I used to work for Disney, ESPN & Golf Channel. Now I teach exclusively online for LA Film School while raising my 10 month old. I also have a small company with my husband called Omarvelous Productions where we mainly live stream weddings at the moment. It's been a fun journey!"

*Marianthy Troupas Mendez*

IV 1996 (Camper)



"My name is Christina Billos and I'm an IV alum from 2011. I got married on September 2, 2023 in Annapolis, Maryland to Adam Chandlee!!!"

*Christina Billos*

IV 2011 (Camper)





“A little update from me, Connie (Savas) Koustenis and James Koustenis. We met at IV as campers in BV 2011, got married in 2019 and just had our son in December 2022!”

*Connie & James Koustenis*

IV 2011 (Campers)



“I am currently in the swing of college applications and looking for schools with soccer programs. I am also currently practicing and playing for The Bahamas National Women’s Team, preparing for some upcoming games in October and November. I am working at my cousin’s store learning sales and customer service. Finally, I am traveling and working on my photography.”

*Diane Maillis*

IV 2023 Session Two (Camper)



Fr. Elias and Presvytera Despina went to IV in 2014 but went to different sessions. They are now living in Long Island, and Father serves at St Paul’s in Hempstead. They have two children, Christo and Theodore.

*Fr. Elias & Pres. Despina Pappas*

IV 2014 (Campers)





In September, Thodori Zafeiropoulos and Terpsichori Pantazi were married at Panagia Eleousa in Glyfa. Thodori, together with the entire family of Zafiropoulos Tours, has coordinated and provided transportation within Greece for Ionian Village for decades. Να ζήσετε!

*Thodori Zafeiropoulos  
& Terpsichori Pantazi*



“I attended the second session in 1997...26 years ago! I’ve since got married, worked (for years) at a major energy company and am currently taking a time out from work and raising our 13 and 15 year old children. Our kids are very involved in traveling sports so I’m really enjoying this part of my life, being there for them. I met my closest friend at camp (although I live in Minnesota and she lives in New Jersey), Christina Chororos. We’ve been checking in on each other since we were sixteen year old girls, pouring our hearts out in The Pines. We’ve been there for each other through marriages, births, losing parents, major life changes... it’s an incredible connection that we owe to our time together at the Ionian Village!”

*Melissa Grumdahl*

IV 1997 (Camper)

Second row up from bottom, fifth from the right;  
Christina is to the left of me.

*To be included in the next Golden Bridge, email us  
your story or update at [ionianvillage@goarch.org](mailto:ionianvillage@goarch.org).*





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### **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

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