

PRESS RELEASE:

## COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO OUTSTANDING EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SCOUTS

The Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting (EOCS) is pleased to announce that scholarships of \$1000 each have been awarded to Despina Anastasiou, Julia Love, and Nicholas Zotos. They were selected from a nationwide group of outstanding students who had already received both the highest award of their scouting organization (Gold or Eagle, for Girl Scouts USA and Scouting BSA, respectively) and the highest Eastern Orthodox Christian Scouting religious award, the Alpha Omega medal. Applicants each year are evaluated on how they demonstrate love of God and their Orthodox Christian Faith, and how they live up to scouting ideals, through scholarship, leadership, community service, and active involvement in their church.

Despina Anastasiou is a communicant of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Astoria, NY, a parish of the Direct Archdiocesan District that has encouraged scouting for over 70 years! She attended Dominican Academy in New York City. In Girl Scouts, she was a member of Troop 4373 and was selected by the Girl Scout Council of Greater New York as “2020 Future Woman of Distinction” for her many leadership and service achievements. For her Gold Award project, “We All Can Dance,” she developed a program that enabled youth with special needs to express themselves through dance, helping them transcend disabilities in a joyful way, and collected hundreds of dance costumes to send to children in Africa so that they, too, could enjoy the full experience of performing. She has also presented a segment on Orthodox Christianity in a national Girl Scout webinar, [with replays available at this link](#). She is now attending Colgate University, studying International Relations. Fluent in Greek, Despina has worked with refugees on the island of Chios in Greece, interned at the Greek Consulate, and was selected as “Miss Greek Independence 2020.” From her application: “My mission...is to reach out to people [seen] as outcasts...At the same time, when I make an effort to improve their day, they in turn become the best part of mine.”

Julia Love is a communicant of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, in Westfield, NJ, a parish of the Metropolis of New Jersey with an active scouting ministry, especially focused on religious awards. She attended Cranford High School. She was a member of Troop 48 of the Girl Scouts, and was recognized with the Outstanding Service Award by the Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey Council. For her Gold Award project, she developed and implemented an ongoing virtual religious education program for elementary school children. Her Silver Award project was also focused on her church, creating a multimedia presentation of Holy Trinity history for the parish’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Julia’s musical talent and training were demonstrated in many years of singing in the church choir, leadership of youth musical performances, and teaching children voice and piano at a local music school. This Fall, she began her studies at the University of Pittsburgh in Special Education

and Developmental Psychology. From her application: "In my spiritual journey... I feel closest to Christ when I am ... sharing kindness to the best of my ability, because I know God loves each of His children unconditionally."

Nicholas Zotos is also a communicant of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Westfield, NJ. It is rare that two applicants from the same parish are selected! He graduated from the Union County Academy for Allied Health Sciences in Scotch Plains, NJ. He was a member of Troop 145 of Scouts BSA, in the Northern NJ Council. He held many positions of leadership and received National Outdoor Awards and two Silver Palms. His Eagle project involved beautifying the exterior of a local elementary school, replacing a large commemorative sign, and addressing a flooding problem and soil erosion through planting and landscaping that was both functional and decorative. During the pandemic, he created a non-profit tutoring program that served many needy youngsters in nearby towns where educational services had been most heavily impacted. He has begun his freshman year at Duquesne University, studying Biosciences in a Pre-medical program. From Nick's application: "In all that I do...I remember St. Luke and his never-ceasing devotion to share God's glory with humanity." "He amplified Christ's message, sharing all that he had to serve others."

The EOCS is a Commission of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA. Formed in 1960, it is tasked with coordinating the Eastern Orthodox Christian Scouting program in America and serving as the officially recognized representative of the Eastern Orthodox Church for both the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts nationally. Along with granting annual scholarships (65 since 1993), the EOCS publicizes Eastern Orthodox Christian scouting, holds retreats, assists in the formation of troops, and offers three age-appropriate religious awards for scouts. Eastern Orthodox members of Scouts BSA, Girl Scouts of the USA, Exploring, Venturing, American Heritage Girls, Trail Life, and Camp Fire are eligible. For more information about any of these topics, visit the EOCS website at [www.eocs.org](http://www.eocs.org) or contact Dr. Miriam E. Kotsonis, EOCS Scholarship Chairman; [mekotsonis@gmail.com](mailto:mekotsonis@gmail.com); (908) 672-0001.