



ACS Athens interviews Mr. Athinodoros Papandreou

Neurosurgeon
Father of Panos and George

by Katerina Michalakakou



Athinodoros Papandreou is a prominent Neurosurgeon from the Athens Medical Center and a parent of ACS Athens for sixteen years. He has witnessed many significant changes that have taken place at the school and has always supported and shown his commitment. Athinodoros Papandreou knew at a very young age what he wanted to do. His passion for the nervous system, the brain and the desire to help and meet the needs of others, not only turned him into a knowledgeable and skilled scientist, but also into a caring husband and a devoted father.

What do you remember from your school days and how would you describe yourself as a child?

Well, I went to a small private school close to my house during my Elementary years that had a friendly family environment. This was actually a contrasting picture to Varvakeio Middle and High school in the center of Athens that I attended later. I still remember with great joy my whereabouts with my peers in my neighborhood and in the center of Athens, which allowed me to discover corners of my city and solidify bonding with my friends. I was a timid boy by nature, and rather quiet, but had an inquisitive and studious personality and from this aspect I turned out to be a very good student from the beginning. My favorite subjects were language arts and biology. As a teenager, I liked socializing and dancing, which in a way helped me to develop strong friendships with my peers.

Did you have an idea what your professional life would be? Did your parents support and encourage you?

I am afraid yes (giggles). Since I was in Middle school, I had a strong interest in the nervous system and the brain and always felt a sense of giving towards those who were in need or in pain. Even at a young age, the impulse to attend medicine was very strong. My parents supported me in every possible way they could and helped me greatly fulfill my expectations. Their constant encouragement boosted my ambitions and helped me overcome obstacles and misfortunes.

Was there someone or something that inspired you to aim high? Who was your role model?

Although my father wasn't a doctor, he was my role model. He was a very successful military professional and his strong and caring personality helped me carry on with my ambition to become a doctor.



Do you have any hobbies? If yes, what are they?

My work as a doctor is extremely demanding and challenging at the same time, and absorbs most of my daily energy, nevertheless I have hobbies and these include, cooking, gardening, reading books, listening to music, drawing (which I like a lot) and a little bit of running. All these help me to relax and offer me a way out to some hidden creativity skills that I possess. At school, I used to read lots of historical and archaeological books and also visited archaeological sites and monuments.

Do you believe that work and personal life can be balanced? How do you tackle this issue?

A successful professional, especially a doctor, as I am has very limited personal time by definition to spend with his family, and from this point of view my wife, Maria and I have tried very hard to keep the balance and allow ourselves to spend time with our children and deal with everyday family matters. Looking back, I can't say that I am happy, but I think my children have appreciated my efforts and intention to spend quality time with them. It is certainly difficult to keep the balance, but I make sure that certain periods of my time are untouched by my work and other external intrusions and dedicated only to my family.

Do you think that one's personality determines the kind of job they will have? How would you describe yourself now and what do you think has helped you to succeed in your career? Do you take risks?

I do believe that there is always a certain job suitable for a certain person. Personal characteristics define to a great extent job selection and the quality of someone's working habits stand as prerequisites for a professionally, successful career. As far as my attributes are concerned, passion, perseverance, determination and above all hard work are the cornerstones in which my professional success was based. My work as a doctor demands quick and crucial decisions on a daily basis that affect a patient's health and well-being for the rest of his life.

So in a way, I have learned to swim in deep waters and for me risk-taking is synonymous to decision-making. Over the years, I have learnt to trust my experience and my increasing scientific knowledge.

Has the current situation in Greece influenced your personal and work life? What attributes do you think someone must have in order to get through the turmoil?

The social and financial crisis has made me reconsider many every day things I believed as steady and given. This includes certain lifestyle, but most of all an attitude towards life that had remained disguised so far under the coat of materialistic prosperity. It is difficult to advise on how to handle this very difficult situation; I think that returning to more traditional values of Greek culture, such as strong family bonds, compassion for the elderly and the weak, may be the right recipe to get through it.

You have two sons: Panos, who graduated in 2008 and is now in his fourth year in Pharmacy and George, who is in Grade 12. What factors did you consider before picking the right school for your children? What expectations did you have from the school? And were they met?

My wife, Maria and I had the opportunity of receiving an education in Greece, England and the United States. Upon returning to Greece, we tried to find a school that would provide our sons a high quality education, prepare them adequately for studying abroad and at the same time, help them acquire a multinational mentality, without losing the Greek identity. Above all, we felt that the school should make our children happy. After a long and copious search, we felt that ACS was the only school that could fulfill our expectations and we are proved right. Looking back, we are certain that we took the correct decision for our children and looking ahead, we are more than certain that ACS will continue to reward parents with similar expectations as ours. An undoubted proof to this is that my children would never change ACS for any other school and they will hopefully expect their children to attend it.



In three words, how would you describe ACS Athens?

- Interaction
- Student Centered
- Friendly

What activities do you enjoy doing with your children?

I treasure the time I spend with my children. We like going to nice restaurants, to the movies, and when they were younger we used to go on trips, visited museums and archaeological sites. I always try to be present at their school activities, such as soccer matches. This has helped our relationship grow a lot.

***Are you strict with your children?
What topics do you discuss with them?
What vision do you have for your children?***

Not at all. My parents hadn't been strict to me and generally speaking, I don't believe that being strict with your children helps them become strong individuals. I may be strict with them only when it has to do with good conduct and personal integrity. I have taught my sons to express their opinions freely, but at the same time to respect the views of others. As a consequence, I am able to discuss everything with them.

What message would you like to share with the ACS Athens Community?

A message about ACS that I would like to share with the community is my belief that ACS is the best student-centered school in Greece and that it requires the synergy of teachers, staff and parents in order to help it maintain its position.

However, I would also like to share a motivational message and urge people to help others, especially those who are in need, because at the end of the day, what remains with us is the good conduct and the positive interactions we have had with people around us. For me that is the number one energy booster.

