

# HOW TO PLAN A SUCCESSFUL AHEPA DAY PROGRAM



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## INTRODUCTION

AHEPA plays an important role in the community. Since AHEPA Day is a recognized event in the Greek Orthodox Churches across the United States and Canada, an excellent opportunity exists to promote the work done by AHEPA. By implementing a well-coordinated program of events, your chapter is able to enhance its image by illustrating the caring spirit that exists in the AHEPA family.

The Order of AHEPA has created this "How To" Booklet to assist you with planning AHEPA Day. We encourage you to share this booklet with members of your executive committee so everyone can be an active participant in the planning and implementation process. Also note that this booklet is meant only as a guide for your promotional activities. Feel free to add your own ideas to the projects suggested in this package.

For those chapters who are energetic, consider turning AHEPA Day into AHEPA Week! Your chapter can host events throughout the entire week. Whichever you choose, we hope you have a truly rewarding and successful program!

Fraternally yours,  
Basil N. Mossaidis  
Executive Director  
Order of AHEPA

## IMPORTANT AUDIENCE

It is important to understand that there are several audiences or groups that you should target during AHEPA Day or AHEPA Week.

### A. Greek Community

1. *Parish Members*- Remember, these are your future members and also, participants in many of your programs. But, they really do not know a lot about AHEPA. Do whatever you can to educate them.

2. *Parish Priest*- He is a key person in your community. Usually the priests who are more informed on AHEPA and its functions, and the more that AHEPA recognizes and involves its priests in their events, the easier it is to function within the community.

3. *Parish Council*- It is always a good idea to keep the Parish Council involved, since they carry out the business affairs of the community. And, they are also potential AHEPA members.

4. *AHEPA Members*- it is important to keep all of your members informed, and not just the members who attend meetings. Especially on AHEPA Day, it is important to have your members turn out to be "AHEPA Ambassadors" during your events.

### B. Non-Greek Community

We are very proud to be a member of the Order of AHEPA, but we feel even more proud when a non-Greek person has knowledge of our fraternity. It is up to the individual chapters to generate media coverage to help disseminate information on AHEPA. For AHEPA Day, consider the following:

1. *Proclamation*- see our attached page 9 that explains to you the benefits of having your Mayor officially proclaim AHEPA Day.

2. *Media*- see our attached page 6 which explains the uses and benefits of a news release, which will generate coverage in your local media.

Now continue to read through this booklet with those important audiences in mind. Be creative in choosing ideas to implement your own local program.

## Sample Timeline

1. *Inform Your Members*--Inform your chapter members in your monthly bulletin, that AHEPA Day is coming soon and how important it is for all members to be involved.
2. *Select a Committee*--At the first meeting possible, select a committee to work on planning AHEPA Day. As many members of the Executive (especially the President) should be on this committee, since a lot of the program involves the image of the Chapter.
3. *Put Together a Program of Events*--Go through this booklet and decide which items will be part of your chapter's AHEPA Day Program.
4. *Have an Executive Meeting with your Priests*--All priests will receive a letter or encyclical from Archbishop Demetrios proclaiming AHEPA Day in the Greek Orthodox Churches of the United States and Canada. It is important to have your Executive Committee meet early with the priest to let him know some of your preliminary plans and that he give, you his blessing. In a kind, yet strong request, the priest should be urged to have his sermon on AHEPA Day entitled "What AHEPA has done in our community."
5. *Get Approval From the Parish Council*--Since you will be using the Church hall, you should send a letter to the Parish Council for permission.
6. *Send a Letter to the Mayor & Government Officials (see page 10)*--To generate media coverage, send a letter to the Mayor and government officials requesting an official proclamation for AHEPA Day.
7. *Order Membership Application/Brochures from Headquarters*--Headquarters has recently produced a new AHEPA information & membership brochure. Whatever events you plan, consider handing out one brochure to everyone present. Even if they do not apply for membership, you will be educating them on the ideals and principles of the AHEPA.
8. *Send a News Release to the Local Media (see page 7)*--Whether you receive an official proclamation from the Mayor, or not, you can still issue a news release to the local media. This will generate free media coverage. You should also follow up with a telephone call to the media that you send it to (TV, daily newspaper, weekly newspapers, radio stations) and arrange to have a reporter and photographer at one of your key events. Don't forget the Greek media in your area.
9. *Hang the AHEPA Poster on your Community Bulletin Board*--Along with this plan book, your chapter secretary should have received an AHEPA Day poster. You will notice that there is a space at the bottom of the poster to fill in the time

and date of your events. It has been left blank, since some chapter events are not celebrated on AHEPA Day. The poster design is consistent with the Membership & information brochure mentioned above. The two items are a nice promotional and informational package for your chapter.

## **EVENTS AND IDEAS TO CHOOSE FROM**

1. All members coming to church on AHEPA Day should be seated in the front pews.
2. Remind all members coming to church on AHEPA Day that they should wear their AHEPA pins.
3. Try and have all members coming to church on AHEPA Day that they should take communion.
4. Have the priest talk about AHEPA in his Sermon.
5. Pay for the after-church Coffee & Donut Social gathering in the community hall or basement.
6. Show the AHEPA movie - "Ripples," available through AHEPA Headquarters.
7. Hand out the new AHEPA Membership Application/Brochure (which tells the AHEPA Story) to all parishioners.
8. Have the Chapter President give a SHORT speech on how AHEPA has helped the Greek and non-Greek community, over the years.
9. Use an AHEPA Certificate of Honor to recognize work by key people in the community for outstanding Service (Parish Council President, Sunday School Director, Choir Director, School Principal).
10. Recognize AHEPA and Daughters Past Presidents in the hall.
11. Recognize 25 and 50-year members present.
12. Organize a Voter Registration Drive.

## **USES OF A NEWS RELEASE**

During AHEPA Day, you will be trying to obtain as much publicity as possible concerning your chapter's activities. One of the best ways to get coverage from the local media is to send them a news release. It is important that you follow specific guidelines for your news release to ensure that it receives the attention that it deserves.

Please refer to the sample news release on the next page. It will give you a good idea of the layout and content.

The following are some important tips on how to organize your news release so that it follows all of the media's editorial guidelines:

1. The first paragraph should discuss who, what, when, where, why and how of your event(s). The remainder of the release should elaborate on the basic facts. Starting with the most important and ending with the least important information.
2. Be sure to deal only with the facts about your event - not with personal opinions.
3. It is important that you consult all members of the Chapter Executive and Committee to make sure that all key points have been included.
4. Also very important, at the top of the release, include the name and telephone numbers (work and home) of your chapter contact for AHEPA Day.
5. Be sure that your spelling and grammar are perfect. It is a good idea to have a second person proofread it for you.
6. Always mail news releases via first class mail.
7. One week after you mail the releases, make a follow-up telephone call to each of the media and see if they have any questions, and if they are able to send a reporter with photographer (or TV cameraman) to the event. If there is a meal or food at the event, tell them that they will be given the meal – FREE!

**SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE—Use your AHEPA Chapter Stationery!**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Date)

For more information, contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter President

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

The (Chapter Name) chapter # of (city name), will join over 900 chapters across the United States and Canada in observing AHEPA Day on Sunday, (date). The chapter activities will recognize the contributions of key people within the Greek community of (city name).

Guided by the theme "Maintain the Values and Spirit of Your Hellenic Heritage," the chapter will kick off its activities with members attending liturgy at 10:30 a.m. at (name) Greek Orthodox Church (address). Father (name), parish priest, will give a sermon on the accomplishments of AHEPA in our community.

Following the service, AHEPA will sponsor a social hour of coffee and donuts, highlighted by AHEPA Certificates of Honor being given to key people in recognition of their work in the community outstanding service. The people to receive awards are (name) and (name).

(City name) AHEPA Chapter President, commented, "insert his comment here."

50-year AHEPA member (Insert his name here) noted, "insert his comment here."

AHEPA Day is recognized annually \*the Greek Orthodox Churches across the United States and Canada (and is recognized each year by special messages from many governors and city officials).

(Insert Mayor's name here), Mayor of (city) Stated that "insert his comment here."

Some of the activities of our chapter include (list community-type events where money was raised by your chapter and donated to charitable causes).

The Order of AHEPA was founded in Atlanta Georgia in 1922, for the purpose of assisting all immigrants of Greek descent to achieve American citizenship through individual city chapters, or "schools of instruction." The basis of chapter meetings includes the principles of American government, the use and increased fluency in the English language and facilitates assimilation by encouraging members to actively participate in the civic life of his American community.

Since their early days, the membership has strived to maintain these lofty goals and objectives. The only difference is that chapters now span the entire United States, Canada (since 1926), Australia and the Bahamas.

Although approximately 95% of the membership of AHEPA is composed of American or Canadian citizens of Hellenic descent, membership is open to anyone who believes in the objects of the Order.

All AHEPAns are members of local chapters, which hold periodic meetings and sponsor a number of social and charitable activities. The members elect chapter officers annually.

AHEPA Chapters are grouped into regional Districts that organize seminars, conferences, fundraising and social events. District officers are elected annually at the District Convention.

Each chapter elects delegates to represent their chapter at The Supreme Convention, held every year during the month of July. National projects and issues relating to the Chapters and Districts are discussed, culminating in the election of national officers to the Supreme Lodge and Board of Directors.

AHEPA is a unique organization, in that it heads a "family of four auxiliaries." All four work closely together teaching mutual respect and cooperation. They include:

- Daughters of Penelope - the senior woman's auxiliary;
- Maids of Athena - the young woman's auxiliary;
- Sons of Pericles - the young man's auxiliary;

There are over 1,000 chapters *of* the AHEPA Family throughout the United States and Canada, with a total membership in excess *of* 60,000!

## **USES OF A PROCLAMATION**

The official proclamation can be used to attract media by stating that observance of AHEPA Day has received endorsement by the Governor (Premier - Canada) and Mayor.

A copy of the proclamation can be framed and placed in your AHEPA room, Church or community hall lobby. Notice of the official proclamation can be displayed on bulletin boards during the month prior to AHEPA Day.

A copy can also be distributed to AHEPA members in your monthly newsletter.

The letter to your mayor or government official should be sent to his office several weeks prior to AHEPA Day. This allows enough time to coordinate an official signing ceremony. The ceremony is a good opportunity to take photographs that can be sent to local newspapers and displayed on your community or AHEPA bulletin board.

## SAMPLE LETTER TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

Date

The Honorable (name)

Mayor of (city)

Address

City, Zip (postal) Code

Dear Mayor (name);

As President of (name) AHEPA Chapter #??. of (city), I am writing to request your recognition of the contributions made by our chapter to the community-at-large. This years observance of AHEPA Day, endorsed by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America, will be celebrated on (date).

As part or our observance, we would like you to honor our chapter with an official proclamation.

The Order of AHEPA - the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association - is the largest Greek heritage organization in the world and a major community service organization in North America. There are over 1000 chapters of the AHEPA family, with over (60,000 members.) The AHEPA was founded in 1922 in order to assist all immigrants of Greek descent in assimilating into the American community, while maintaining pride in their heritage.

Since 1922, AHEPA has expanded its objectives with the creation of its own charitable Foundation contributing to major charitable causes around the world. During World War II, AHEPA sold over \$500 million in War Bonds. Recent examples of AHEPA's more than two million dollar annual charitable, philanthropic, cultural and educational funding include underwriting of the recent Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island restorations, funding of medical research in the fight against diseases such as juvenile diabetes and Cooley's Anemia and an extensive national scholarship program.

The AHEPA also administrates a nationwide senior citizens housing program with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The AHEPA program comprises 20 housing projects worth over \$100 million and has been lauded for its integrity and high quality of its buildings. In the wake of September 11, 2001, AHEPA raised over \$150,000 for the relief effort. AHEPA also has an impressive history in educating the American public about the historic friendship between Greece and the United States, and on the present Cyprus problem.

We would appreciate receiving this proclamation at least *two weeks before* AHEPA Day, for promotional purposes.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

*Your name*

Chapter President

We urge your chapter to use this “plan book”  
on the way to a successful AHEPA Day promotion.

If you need any more information or materials, please call  
AHEPA Headquarters at (202) 232-6300.

Good Luck!

