

Running Along The Marathon Road In The Footsteps Of The Men Before Him



By Christina Sofiakis, LCSW

*Pictured above, Vlassis Karavasilis,
Founder and President of TELMISSOS Runner Organization
Marathonas, Greece.*

I have had the pleasure, over the last few months, to be communicating with the founder of the *Telmissos Runners Organization*. Vlassis Karavasilis, who formed his runner's organization in 2007, has taken part in 18 Classic Marathons and over 35 marathons in Greece and other countries. We discussed his love of running, how it all began, and his personal life philosophy.

Vlassis Karavasilis is a man of character and resolve. His love of our culture and our history brought tears to my eyes throughout our conversation. I felt such a connection to this pioneer! I am looking forward to meeting him and know that Marathon Week 2011 will be the beginning of a long relationship, a kinship if you will, between Marathonas and Chicago!

Karavasilis said that he was born to run. He explained how he was an energetic child who used to run around the town of Marathon. He was always interested in sports, yet there were not many opportunities in his town: no stadiums and no gyms to help a young boy channel this energy. He was inspired by his grandfather, who took Karavasilis by the hand at the young age of nine and walked with him on the Peace Walk from Marathon to Athens. Although his first love was cycling (in which he won several awards for as a young teenager), he was inspired by his older brother, who was in the Greek multi-sport club *Panellinos Gymnastikos Syllogos* and had ran his first Marathon at 19. Karavasilis followed in his footsteps, signed up in a sport club and started distance running. When Karavasilis was 19, he, like his brother, ran his first marathon. At that race, while running to *Kalimarmaro Stadium* in Athens, he cut an olive branch in Marathonas in honor of his grandfather. His spleen was hurting during the race and, although the paramedics wanted to take him to the hospital, thoughts of his grandfather and the ancient runners before him inspired him to persevere and reach his goal.

According to Karavasilis, running is the most sacred of sports: it gives the runner a respect for nature, while clearing one's mind and testing one's stamina and psychological limits. "Running a long distance takes you away from false values and brings you in touch with your inner self," Karavasilis says. He and I agree that running a marathon is also a metaphor for life: "It is no coincidence that the Ancient Greeks considered runners' achievements glorious," Karavasilis adds. And, the journey towards self – discovery is what Hellenic Foundation is all about.

To have Vlassis Karavasilis and his team of runners coming to Chicago to run for our cause, is especially symbolic of the Ancient Greek spirit to persevere, and take the steps to victory and peace. At Hellenic Foundation, this is the philosophy we embrace as we assist individuals and families we serve in the steps they take on the road to an emotionally healthy life.

We look forward to the pleasure of having Vlassis Karavasilis and his team of runners with us in October for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and our Annual Gala/Fundraiser.

To sponsor Vlassis Karavasilis and the members of the
TELMISSOS Running Team, go to
www.hellenicfoundation.org/RUNNER-BIOGRAPHIES.html