

Greek entrepreneur presses forward in Bulgaria

Recession or no recession, Greek entrepreneur **Vassilis Mouchtaris** has announced an aggressive push into the Bulgarian market for the next few years with the opening of 30 coffee shops and 2 malls.

The 30 coffee shops, the first 2 which will open in the seaside port of Varna, will be under the

company Welcome Holdings which is a hospitality group with over 450 stores worldwide. The coffee stores are estimated to bring a turn over rate of 8.10 million euros in the first three years. (nothing like being aggressive!) Mr. Mouchtaris hopes to use Bulgaria as a spring board into Turkey in the future



His other projects will include opening 2 malls with a total area for renting equal to 55 thousand sq.m. At the moment the company is in the process of negotiation for the purchase of 4 to 6 hectares of land in Sofia where the first trade center is expected to be built.

Olympia Dukakis, Nia Vardalos in Chicago for Greek Gabby Awards

We live in a great region to write about entertainment.

You never know just who might be in town.

"Man with a camera" Nick Mantis, of Merrillville, from the program Around The Region and owner of New Millennium Productions, just tipped me off about a great event this week that's coming to Chicago for the first time.

Have you ever heard of The Gabby?

The Gabby Awards were created to celebrate excellence amongst Greek Americans and "to reward those who embody it."

As Mantis describes this distinction: "The time has come for Greek Americans to celebrate their best and brightest stars in all walks of life and specifically, to honor those people who best exemplify the hard work and excellence in the various areas in which they have excelled both as a community, as well as individuals."

And on Friday, the awards show is being held in the Windy City downtown in the historic Merle Reskin Theater, with the after party immediately after the awards ceremony at the Chicago Hilton Hotel and Towers right next door.

All of the fun and surprises are described at gabbyawards.com, where tickets, ranging from \$200 to \$350, can also be purchased.



AWARDED - - Nia Vardalos and her smoldering co-star Alexis Georgoulis from her new film, "My Life in Ruins," will be presenters at The Gabby Awards in Chicago on June 19, 2009, which were created to celebrate excellence amongst Greek Americans and "to reward those who embody it."

The word "Gabby" evolved loosely from the acronym Greek America's Best and Brightest Stars.

After an exhaustive nomination process by the members of the Gabby Academy, followed by the voting process via the Web site, the Gabby Award winners are announced at the gala awards ceremony

This year, the wonderful and talented

Olympia Dukakis is being honored and Nia Vardalos and her smoldering co-star Alexis Georgoulis from her new film, "My Life in Ruins," will be presenters. Also attending will be Jim Gianopoulos, one of Hollywood's most successful studio heads as chairman of Fox Film Entertainment since July 2000.

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successful studio heads as chairman of Fox Film Entertainment since July 2000. Eleven-time NCAA All American Olympian diver Christina Loukas will present the best athlete award. Bon Appetit Magazine Chef of the Year Michael Psilakis and celeb chef Cat Cora are also attending and helping host the after party. There are also rumblings that singer George Michael may make a guest appearance. Mantis and his video company snagged the lucrative contract to tape the event for Gabby Academy and Greek America Magazine. He even has managed a lock on being "the only camera on the red carpet" to conduct interviews of the celebrities mentioned above. The opinions expressed are solely those of the writer. He can be reached at philip.potempa@nwi.com or 219.852.4327. Today's Celebrity Birthdays Actor Gene Barry is 90. Actress Marla Gibbs is 78. Actor

Jack Bannon ("Lou Grant") is 69. Singer Rod Argent of The Zombies and Argent is 64. Singer Janet Lennon of The Lennon Sisters and businessman-TV personality Donald Trump are 63. Guitarist Barry Melton of Country Joe and the Fish is 62. Drummer Alan White of Yes is 60. Actor Eddie Mekka (Carmine on "Laverne and Shirley") is 57. Actor Will Patton is 55. Singer Boy George is 48. Actress Yasmine Bleeth is 41. Actress Traylor Howard ("Monk," "Two Guys And A Girl") is 38. Actor Daryl Sabara ("Spy Kids") is 17. Nicholas Pietro Santopietro (son of Vanna White) is 15.

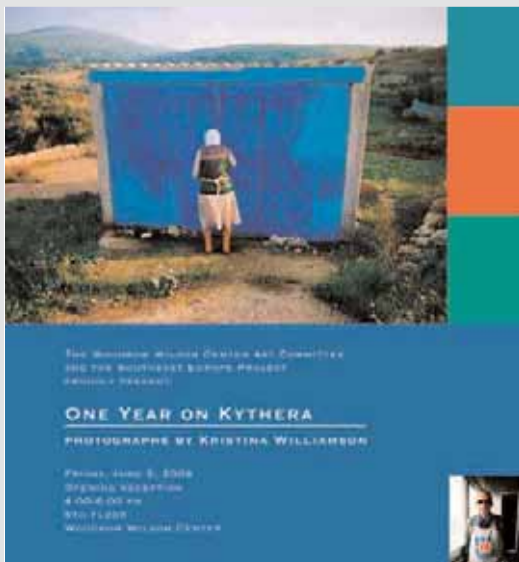
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Photo Exhibit: "One Year On Kythera"



Under the auspices of a J. William Fulbright grant, Williamson spent over a year living and photographing on the Greek island of Kythera. Over the years, Kythera has suffered through massive waves of emigration of its people in search of better opportunities abroad. These mass migrations have caused the population of Kythera to drop to a current mid-winter population of 2,500, leaving many villages laden with vacant homes and some completely abandoned. To the remaining Kytherians, these deserted homes and communities stand as visual reminders of a society once unified by tradition now transformed by ambitions of a different life abroad.