



**TWO LONG ISLAND CHAPTERS FROM THE AMERICAN HELLENIC  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION FAMILY MAKE MAJOR GIFT TO  
OAR**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 20, 2008

Contact: Wendy McKinnon, Programs and Outreach Associate  
(703)243-3466, [scholarship@researchautism.org](mailto:scholarship@researchautism.org)

Arlington, VA– Yesterday, two chapters from the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) family in New York, the Constantine Cassis Chapter #170 (Long Island) and the Daughters of Penelope Pasithea Chapter #141, presented the Organization For Autism Research (OAR) with a donation in the amount of \$17,016. For OAR, this is the largest donation ever received from an organization whose mission is not directly related to autism. The money was raised at a dinner dance this fall that was devoted to raising funds to support autism research. On hand to accept the donation was Board of Director member, Lori Lapin Jones, and her son, Daniel Jones.

AHEPA is a worldwide organization whose mission includes promoting Education, Philanthropy, Civic Responsibility and the spreading of Hellenism throughout America, Australia, Canada and Greece. The members of these two Long Island chapters recognized the challenges facing individuals with autism and their families and resolved to learn more about autism and make an impact. Earlier this year, the Cassis Chapter hosted a forum on autism to educate its members on the disorder and the current research and resources and invited OAR to participate. Lapin Jones and Daniel represented OAR.

AHEPA representatives from both chapters presented the check to Ms. Lapin Jones and her son during the reception for AHEPA's annual Thanksgiving celebration held last evening. Also attending and serving as the Master of Ceremonies was Stratis Vasilakos, District Governor of New York State (AHEPA). Joining Vasilakos in recognizing OAR and then presenting the check were George Drapan, Coordinator of the Cassis Chapter, and Jackie Ursini, President of the Pasithea Chapter of the Daughters of Penelope, which also played an important role in the fundraising efforts.

In accepting the donation, Lori Lapin Jones remarked, "It is extraordinary that this organization with no particular connection to autism meaningfully reached out in their quest to educate themselves on autism and then took the additional step and raised funds for autism. The Long Island chapter of AHEPA is comprised of remarkable individuals who will always occupy a special place in my heart. OAR is honored to receive this special gift."

The individuals most responsible for selecting OAR as the recipient were the Cassis Chapter President, Gus Lucas, and fellow AHEPAN Paul Bossis, who served as co-chairmen of the fall fundraiser. Lucas, who also organized the spring forum on autism, indicated that his chapter decided to learn more about autism and ultimately raise funds for this complicated disorder because

they saw a growing number of families touched by autism on Long Island and a corresponding, strong need for greater autism awareness within the AHEPA and Long Island communities.

“We were impressed with the day-to-day relevance of OAR’s mission with its emphasis on supporting research and providing high quality information and resources to parents of children and adults with autism,” Lucas said. “Beyond that, we found Daniel Jones’ perspective as a loving brother of a person on the autism spectrum to be compelling, optimistic, and greatly inspiring.”

Near the conclusion of last evening’s ceremony, District Governor Vasilakos asked the 115 guests who attended to stand if autism has affected their families. Remarkably, fifteen people rose from their seats.

OAR acknowledges AHEPA’s financial and inspirational contribution with its deepest gratitude.

**ABOUT OAR:** The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is a national, nonprofit organization formed and led by relatives of children and adults with autism and Asperger Syndrome. OAR is dedicated to promoting research that can be applied to help families, educators, caregivers, and individuals with autism find much-needed answers to their immediate and urgent questions.

Since 2001, OAR has awarded more than \$2.2 million to fund 112 applied research studies and published six community-friendly resource guides in its *Life Journey through Autism* series. OAR introduced the Schwallie Family Scholarship Program offering college and vocational school scholarships to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in 2007, and in 2009 and 2010 produced Operation Autism, [www.operationautismonline.org](http://www.operationautismonline.org), a web-based resource for military families touched by autism, and a companion resource guide, *Life Journey through Autism: A Guide for Military Families*.

For more information about OAR, please visit [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org).