

**ANNAMARIE BUONOCORE
YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE MONTH
DECEMBER 2013**



Philo4Thought Mentoring community is pleased to present this month's "Young Professional of the Month" Feature Article! The goal of our monthly features is to provide positive, successful role models who will inspire the next generation of young professionals. Preliminary criteria for YPM candidates is their active engagement in an entrepreneurial initiative or career path. Candidates are typically of Hellenic origin and part of a philanthropic, humanitarian or environmentally-conscious field. Their most essential qualifications are the spirit and compassion to persevere, and the heart to share their knowledge and experience with others.

Over the past few months, I've had the pleasure to chat with Annamarie Buonocore, Founder and Editor of *Voices of Hellenism Literary Journal* (www.VoicesOfHellenism.org), which is based in the San Francisco Bay Area on the West Coast and been in operation since 2011. Annamarie's journey is about more than just choosing a career path; it's about finding a voice... and lending that very opportunity to others. She is a girl with a *Voice!*

JOURNEY AND "AHA" MOMENT: Annamaria has always been fascinated in the arts and society, pursuing undergraduate studies in History and English at San Jose State University (2009-11) along with two years of operatic vocal studies at De Anza Community College (2010-11) and private studies under the tutelage of mentorship of the Italian Tenor Pasquale Esposito (2010-11). Her ultimate plan is to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing. For now, however, her focus is on her writing and editing.

According to Annamarie, the traditional school setting was not her preferred learning environment; she emphasizes the value of her collective personal and professional life experience as a member of the Greek community. "They are the most valuable and important education I've received, helping me set and achieve my current goals for *Voices of Hellenism* as well as my other publishing efforts."

A variety of factors inspired Annamarie to pursue her current career path. She had always admired her father's work as in publishing since the 1980s. "My dad died when I was 12, and I started helping my mother when she took over the business. I knew that it would always be a part of me." His efforts, along with those of his editor and colleague, Mr. Nick Veronico, instilled a deep interest in self-publishing in Annamarie. "I always admired Nick's work as an editor and publisher, and he encouraged me to take this direction in my life...."

Assessing the job market for young professionals pursuing degrees in history and literature, the move towards self-employment seemed both logical and natural for Annamarie. "I wanted to be self-employed like my dad,

but I wanted to incorporate my interests in literature, creative writing and history. I have been very passionate about the Greek community most of my life and wanted to give back to it in a way that was meaningful and that brought about change.” Annamarie started working at the Hellenic Heritage Institute, a small Greek history museum, which afforded her the benefit of a solid research opportunity within her area of interest. In 2011, lack of funding and volunteers led to the shutdown of the establishment and Annamarie was obligated to begin anew. Reflecting upon the conclusion of her term at the museum, Annamarie has no regrets. “...The night the museum leader announced that the project would be dropped, I was devastated. I pulled into a parking lot in a more dangerous part of town to think about my life and sort out my emotions. I knew that working with my own people would be a way to ultimately effecting a positive change in society...” She definitely wanted to continue work that supported the Hellenic community. “I picked up and started my own nonprofit, which led to being self-employed, as I had always wanted to be. As a publisher, I feel blessed by the opportunity to stand behind the knowledge presented, by the joys and triumphs of reading and learning from the written word. *Voices of Hellenism* is a niche to the Greek community, allowing readers and authors to engage topics about great literary figures.” *Voices of Hellenism Literary Journal*, Φωνές Volume I, Number II will be released in January 2014. (www.voicesofhellenism.org). It is, as Annamarie herself calls it, a space for writers and readers alike to engage in discussions about Greek culture and heritage. The goal is simple. To make this information accessible to the community as a whole.

PHILOSOPHY: Annamarie says that her work-life philosophy is very simple and straightforward. “Just try your best to seek truth and knowledge, and as you find more, keep looking for it. Learning is a lifelong process. I do not believe young people should curb their ideas because they fear those with ‘more experience.’ Determination breeds success.” Annamarie follows the very Socratic principle to lead and advocate for the things you believe in rather than to follow the suggestions and comments of other. “I don’t always follow the steps others believe are necessary in life. I’m simply determined to seek truth and knowledge.” Though the plan sounds straightforward enough, most who have pursued it know that the road is not smoothly paved or even clearly mapped out. It takes great courage and an innovative spirit to make one’s way in the world.

There were times when Annamarie considered a career in singing or teaching music or creative writing, but publishing felt like the best fit for her. “Publishing, editing, and writing fulfill me and I feel like the best that I can be. I also love writing poetry and attended a workshop in Athens. At this point, I am focusing my writing life on a new novel inspired by a long-lost relative in the Midwest, which will allow me to trace the roots of my grandmother who was originally from Nebraska.”

Annamarie is very thoughtful in considering how influential the Greek-American community in California was in relation to her overall professional goals and perspectives. “My upbringing in the Greek-American and Philhellenic community in the San Francisco Bay Area inspired me to start the journal. I would not likely have pursued a career in publishing if I had not started *Voices of Hellenism*, which is my favorite part of my work. It is a nonprofit, and it involves some of the greatest people you will ever know, whose writing and ideas inspire me daily.” Having said this, Annamarie also pursues literary interests that span beyond this community. When she is not working to meet the *Voices of Hellenism* deadlines she serves as one of the associate editors for *In Flight USA* (<http://inflight.squarespace.com/articles/>) and is also planning to launch a new political magazine that spans beyond the Hellenic community.

MENTORS: Annamarie says that she has benefited from the advice of many mentors throughout her life, starting with her father and progressing through to her current colleagues. “I would have to mention so many people! To name the most influential mentors in my life... Professor Thanasis Maskaleris and my associate editor, Angelos Sakkis, provided a considerable amount of help and guidance over the years. Dr. Peter Nanopoulos took *Voices* under his wing and also offered so many remarkable ideas. John Vlahos invited me into his incredible library when I first started my work.”

PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES: Managing a career in publication is all about work-life balance and organization! On average, Annamarie spends forty-five dedicated hours per week in her office. “My dad worked about this many hours as well. Most self-employed magazine publishers spend over 40 hours per week at the office, more during the times when something is going to press.” According to Annamarie, the week before a journal goes to the print is the busiest, requiring more time and hours. “In our family, we say don’t cause problems during production week (a little inside joke). It is not an easy field to work in, but it is a very rewarding one. Balancing my schedule is always a challenge. My day planner is my hero. I have a to-do list for each day I work. Spending Sunday afternoons with my dog helps to take the edge off and keeps me balanced. We visit various downtown areas in California (mainly on the coast) in search of doggy bakeries and independent pet stores.”

Since *Voices of Hellenism* is nonprofit, securing funding to print the annual issue is always a challenge. Finding volunteers to dedicate their time is a challenge. Finding quality editors can be a difficult process. Annamarie has to train them till they reach a collaborative breakthrough, which they always do, Annamarie says with a contented smile. “I have to admit that I have a little luck on my side.”

Other general challenges include staying motivated while sorting through administrative matters, which makes issues like ad sales a challenge for Annamarie. She resolved the matter by establishing a team of skilled sales specialists to handle the accounts.

PERSONAL CHALLENGES: Annamarie’s journey of self-discovery as a Greek American is a very touching one, fraught with conceptual and social conflicts that make her a stronger professional today. In her own words: “The Greek-American identity has taken on different forms over the years. My great-grandparents were part of the first wave of Greek immigrants in this area, and they had an aggressive assimilationist view. They wanted to be American, period, so my Greek-American identity took on different forms when I was growing up.” While Annamarie has a fierce pride in her Hellenic heritage, it is something she had to work hard to cultivate and nurture. “My Hellenic heritage is with me on a daily basis. The Greek-American identity is complex. To give you some idea of what I mean, I feel that in many respects we can relate to the stories of people of color... their burdens, their struggles, as we have faced them as well.” Growing up, she attended Catholic schools, where her faith and heritage were constantly being ridiculed in her neighborhood and at school. “I felt embarrassed always having to explain to neighbors and friends, for example, that I celebrated Easter later in the month (or sometimes in May). Back then, there was always a lack of understanding. Things are different today; people want to be ‘ethnic.’”

Naysayers and negativity are challenges Annamarie has had to deal with at the personal and professional levels. “When I first started, my family didn’t like the idea that I was going into business for myself, even if it meant taking over the family business. Coping with that initial lack of support was a monumental challenge, but now they see my perspective, and the Greek community here has been a wonderful asset to my efforts.” This experience seems to strengthen Annamarie’s own resolve to be present as a source of support to other members of the community of Hellenic authors and entrepreneurs. “It is essential that we have a consistent support network for Greek-American authors. This is one of the reasons that I dedicate my time and effort to fiction, poetry, and essays that portray Greek-American life.”

DOWN-TIME: In her spare time, Annamarie sings, paints, swims, does Pilates, takes road trips and long walks with her dog, and spends time with family and friends. She is a diligent philanthropic supporter of various organizations in her area, including Daughters of Penelope, the Hellenic American Professional Society (HAPS), the Friends of Kazantzakis, and the National Forum of Orthodox Church Musicians and Toastmasters International. She also supports ACLU projects concerning civil and human rights. She smiles at the thought of writing as a hobby, which is how family and friends used to view it. “It’s a little more than a hobby. It is a way of life.... The hobby that got serious.”

WORDS OF WISDOM: So far, the most critical life lesson for Annamarie is knowing when to let go. “I have an aggressive personality. I like to be heard, to get the world to see my perspective, to stand up for those who are like me yet not privileged enough to have a voice.... But I have to remember that I cannot win every battle. Sometimes I have to accept that I’ve lost, or that the fight is not worth it any longer. This was a very difficult lesson for me to learn, but taking on so many simultaneous tasks has helped me learn to focus on the important matters.”

1. Don’t sweat the small stuff.
2. There is still a need for printed media.
3. Always end situations with a handshake.
4. Be yourself and make the decisions that are best for you.
5. Be your own advocate
6. Always remain determined.
7. Always seek truth and knowledge, and when you find it, just keep looking for it.
8. Education is a lifelong process that occurs beyond classrooms. Life is about research, discovery, and passion.
9. Be determined but adaptable and you will reach your goals.
10. Do what you love and care about, don’t let things (people’s advice, etc.) get in your way.

Philo4Thought asks, *Looking back... are there any regrets?* Annamarie explains that while she has been satisfied with the majority of her decisions and experiences, there is something her father advised her to do that she wishes she had taken to heart earlier on. “I wish I would have been easier on some of the Greek people I had initially worked with. I was so driven at the time that I might have come across as disrespectful. My dad had always told me to end situations with a handshake, but I didn’t in the beginning. People born and raised in Greece see things from a different perspective than those born and raised here, and it bothered many that that a woman was taking on a publication project. I fought back hard and I wish I had been more peaceful about accepting our differences.”

MENTORING: Annamarie is happy to mentor members of the Hellenic Community other young professionals! For mentoring inquiries, email philo4thought@yahoo.com. To submit work to *Voices of Hellenism Literary Journal*, email info@vhpprojec.org by 09/01/14.

CONTACT: **Twitter:** @Voices-Of
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/VoicesOfHellenism
 Web: www.voicesofhellenism.org

READERSHIP: While *Philo4Thought’s* primary readership is the young Hellenic professional of New York, we are very pleased that our online exposure has caused our targeted readership – and through it, candidate recommendations – to shift beyond this scope! Young professionals of all communities and origins are welcome to contribute comments and questions! Please contact us if you’d like to recommend someone.

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Voices