

ALUMNI PROFILE: NITZIA EMBIRICOS LOGOTHETIS

Alumna Founds Maternal Health Institute in NYC

To say that Nitzia Embiricos Logothetis ('02AB) is an accomplished and busy young woman is an understatement. She is a mother, a wife, a psychotherapist, and most recently, the founder of the Seleni Institute, a maternal mental health and wellness center in New York City that opened its doors in May 2013. She credits her Greek roots, her husband's support, and her year at CYA with giving her the drive and vision to create this unique and comprehensive women's facility.

Upon graduating from high school in England, Nitzia had dreams of learning Greek, connecting with her Greek roots, and pursuing a career in psychotherapy. She felt that taking a "gap year" between high school and college, a fairly common UK practice, would be a perfect time to go to Greece. Growing up in a home where French, English, and Spanish were the primary languages, her Greek father was delighted that she showed an interest in also learning Greek, and agreed to help her find a program.

As a 17 year old, she was one of the youngest students ever to attend CYA. She stayed at CYA for the entire academic year and says that her life was forever changed because of it. Not only did she learn Greek and come to appreciate her Greek roots, but something deeper happened – she learned to love Greek cultural values like giving to others and making time for loved ones. This would later play a significant role in her life and career pursuits.

Upon leaving CYA, Nitzia went back to England for college and realized immediately that she had been forever changed by the Greek sunshine, landscape, and the liveliness of the people. Her home country felt dark, dreary, foggy, and unhelpful. It was then that she decided to move to America and was accepted to Brown University. According to Nitzia, her year at CYA built her confidence, gave her the courage to move to America, and ultimately, opened her eyes to marrying George Logothetis, a British man of Greek descent whom she met during her last semester at Brown.

After she married, settled in NYC and began practicing as a psychotherapist, Nitzia gave birth to her first son. It was then that women began confiding in her about their own maternal health and wellness problems. She was astounded at how few resources were available to these women who were having recurring miscarriages, stillborn babies, post-partum depression, and other maternal health problems. She began to realize how isolated women can feel when they have no nearby family and they must cope with difficult situations independently. Inspiration and motivation to build a support network for these women came from the Greek cultural values of collectivism and being



interdependent on the "village." Recognizing this need, Nitzia created a "village" for these women - the Seleni Institute. The idea behind it is that helping the mother ultimately helps the whole family.

The Seleni Institute is completely unique in that it provides expertise in all areas of maternal mental health and wellness under one roof. It is a public charity that provides a clinic, support groups, workshops, and online assistance for women with problem pregnancies, lactation and sleep training issues, fertility problems, and even grief and bereavement counseling. It also provides support for new mothers to prepare for birth, life with a newborn, or post-partum issues. Equally important is its mission to fund research in order to remain current with the latest treatments for maternal reproductive health. The Seleni Institute gives balanced and reasonable opinions to help empower women to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

Nitzia says that the Seleni Institute is very Greek; it provides a desperately-needed service for women who need to feel supported and bonded to others going through the same situations. Her time at CYA gave her a comparison between Greek cultural values and those of other countries, without which she doesn't think she would have ever dreamed up the Seleni Institute.

The Seleni Institute's success thus far has been remarkable. If you are interested in learning more about the Seleni Institute and its work, please visit the website at www.seleni.org.

RECEPTION

CYA Alumni in Southern California: Mark your calendars! CYA will be hosting a 50th Anniversary Reception in Southern California in early April. Check the website (and closer to the date, your inboxes/mailboxes) for more details.