



Congratulations to Eleni Giannikopoulos on being nominated and selected as the Section's May 2021 Spotlight Member! Eleni has been a member of AWWA through various aspects of her career for about 10 years. She works for Suburban Consultant Engineers, Inc. for the past eight (8) years in various capacities and is currently the Business Development Manager. Her career background also includes the Philadelphia Water Department, CDM Smith and County of Morris - Engineering Division.

Eleni is currently active in the Section's Membership Committee. She is also involved in other associations including New Jersey Water Environment Association (NJWEA), New Jersey Association of Environmental Authorities (NJAEA) and serves on the organization's Water and Stormwater Committees, the New Jersey Water Association (NJWA) and is appointed on the Technical Advisory Board for the New Jersey Transportation Infrastructure Bank (NJTIB).

Why did you decide to go into the field of water?

I was raised in Thessaloniki Greece – My father was a teacher, with the summers off, my family spent the entire summer camping on the beaches of Thasos, Ammouliani and Halkidiki. My love and appreciation for the environment came early from those childhood memories. I found it fascinating how the rural parts of Greece ran out of water frequently whereas City tap water was in abundance. Additionally, my hometown of Thessaloniki had sections of combined sewers discharging in the gulf and I was also amazed how such a beautiful city tolerated odors that were unbearable during heavy storms. Flash forward to when I was in high school and we were asked what your dream job would be, for me, the answer was to work in the water industry and better understand all that is involved – from diversion of raw water to treatment, storage and distribution to wastewater and stormwater discharge.

How did you become a volunteer for AWWA? What motivates you to be active in the Section?

My first involvement with AWWA was during my fresh-out-of-college days at the Philadelphia Water Department. I participated in the young professionals' events, where we would be offered tours of water treatment plants. I remember specifically the first tour of the Water Treatment Plant in Delran. I became friends with other young professionals and formed friendships that carried through the years, even if my participation in AWWA may not have been as active. It was through those friendships that I maintained contact in the water industry and when I was ready to return to work after having kids, I was welcomed with open arms from those same contacts that I made at my first tour of the Delran water treatment plant 13 years prior. They invited me to participate at AWWA NJ events and helped me get back on track! Now that I am back in the industry, I am committed to pay it forward and offer my support and contribution to AWWA and the membership.

How long have you been an AWWA member and what have you gotten from your membership?

Officially, I have been a member since 2017. I value the support and team building opportunities! On a professional level, staying current on regulatory topics, networking and building relationships. I thrive on problem solving, and the open dialogue discussing hardships water utilities face and how to overcome them. I find that all the right people gravitate to AWWA and together make a change for the better.

Hobbies and outside interests?

I am very passionate about my Greek heritage. I taught Greek School for close to ten years. I am a volunteer Sunday school teacher. My husband and I are involved in our parish and volunteer for our annual Greek Festival fundraiser event. We speak Greek at home. Any radio station playing in the car or in the house is streaming live from Greece.

We enjoy hosting and spending time with family and friends making memories.

My happy place is the beach. We try to make the trip to Greece as frequently as possible – if not- any personal time off must be spent near the water.

What legacy would you like to leave behind?

If my personal mission statement can be summarized in one word, the word is “Filotimo”. I love mentoring and assisting others to succeed. I find great pleasure in being a significant contributor in all things I get involved in and I challenge myself and those around me every day to become our best selves. Remain self-aware, work hard, and staying humble. My focus and determination are on the integrity and reputation of my signature work product and strive to be a reliable and accountable team member. Own my failures and share my successes. Earn the respect of those around me and work on building long lasting relationships based on trust and common goals. All of the above keeps me busy every single day, all the while striving for the appropriate work-life balance, reminding myself that I work to live and not live to work - and to cherish every moment I have with my family.