

# Peabody celebrates Greek roots and resilience

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By **Amanda Lurey**  
Weekly News Staff

To celebrate and honor Greek Independence Day, students from the St. Vasilios Greek School, an afternoon language school located at St. Vasilios Church, gathered at City Hall for a flag-raising ceremony.

Mayor Ted Bettencourt kicked off the event by addressing the approximately 60 Greek students and community members, highlighting the importance and impact of the Greek community in Peabody.

“The Greek community means so much to the City of Peabody. It’s always been one of the building blocks of Peabody, and to be able to celebrate Greek Independence Day with all of you is an event and a moment that I always welcome and cherish,” Bettencourt said.

Father Yanni Michaelidis, of St. Vasilios Church, emphasized the resilience and cultural assimilation of Greeks in the U.S., first mentioning how Greeks “endured centuries of a life of oppression.” This year’s Greek Independence Day marks 205 years of independence from the Ottoman Empire. Greeks were under Ottoman rule for more than 400 years, and St. Vasilios Greek School Principal Dina Kalaitzidis noted that Greek Independence Day marks when the revolution began “for our fight for independence.”

Michaelidis joked that the holiday is also a reminder that “Greeks make really good Americans.”

“They’re hard working. They’re freedom-oriented. They enjoy their rest and relaxation from time to time, but they’re always incredibly talented at assimilating to the culture and the way of life of said place, while at the same time holding onto their customs, to their own traditions, to their own lifestyles, if you will,”



STAFF PHOTOS | SPENSER HASAK

**Dionysios Diamantopoulos, of Peabody, waves a Greek flag as he joins his classmates from St. Vasilios Greek School during the Greek Independence Day celebration at Peabody City Hall.**

Michaelidis said.

He continued, “It is an honor once again to be here with St. Vasilios to celebrate the 200 and plus years of the Greek nation state, to celebrate as our church community and our Greek community here, and to at the same time give thanks to Peabody for welcoming our initial immigrants over a century ago, for allowing them to find a place of work, a place of refuge, and for enabling them in their own way to build a community around here and to lay roots that have been long-lasting, and God willing, very fruitful as the years continue to go on.”

Community members beamed up at the flag as it was raised and around at their friends and family as the national anthem was sung. Kalaitzidis said she looks forward to Greek Independence Day every year. She emphasized that Greek-Americans are “so many generations out” and



**The Greek flag is raised over Peabody City Hall in recognition of Greek Independence Day.**

that “we strive to keep our culture going and teach our children the struggles of our ancestors and keep the language going as well.”

Theodora Christopoulos, a fifth-grader at South Memorial Elementary School who started learning at the St. Vasilios Greek School when she was 3, was one of many students there

dressed in ethnic costumes. She said it’s important for her to celebrate her culture.

“I wanted to come out today because Greek Independence Day is part of my life, and it’s fun and really pretty seeing how far our lifeline has gone. And after our lives have been turned around by many incidents from the past, we

have been going through for many years, and today, we are here to celebrate all those breakthroughs,” she said.

Beyond the incredible Greek food and culture, Christopoulos said “the most important part is being with people who you love and people who you are going to meet.”



**Students from St. Vasilios Greek School wear traditional clothing and wave Greek flags.**

