

# communicator

The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

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## Special Insert:

NAESP's 2009 Convention and Exposition

## Sava Remembered for His Passion, Devotion, and Kindness

**M**ore than 130 people attended the funeral of Samuel G. Sava, executive director emeritus of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 1. Sava lost his battle to cancer Sept. 27 at the age of 77.

The service was held at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, where Sava and his family were long-time members, and was presided by the Rev. Dr. John T. Tavlarides, who married Sava and his wife Elizabeth 42 years ago, as well as their daughter Anna decades later. "He was a man who loved and a man who gave," Tavlarides said. "Sam was more a good man than not ... Let's look at Sam and take from his example."

### A Family Man

Following the hour-long service, the family hosted a reception in Sava's honor, during which friends and family eulogized Sava as a wonderful husband, father, friend, and leader. "My father was the great-

est," said Sava's son George. "To me he was more than just my father. He was my best friend, the greatest teacher. He was my hero, he was my

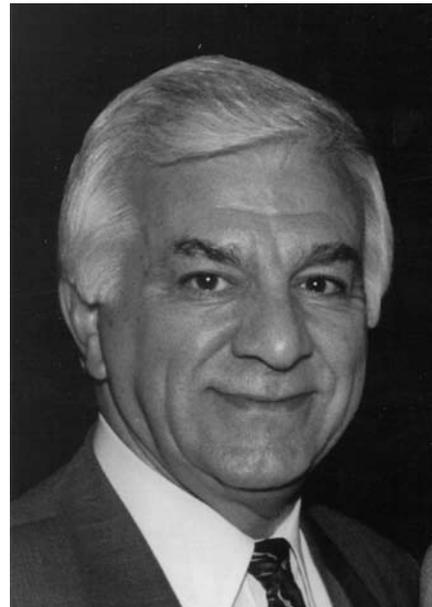
king. As a child, he supported me and protected me. And as an adult, he advised me and he inspired me."

Sava's son-in-law Kenneth Namnoum, whose nickname for Sava was "Papoo," praised his father-in-law for his kindness, and devotion to his family. "If you judge a man by his success and the quality of his children, Papoo scored yet another A-plus," Namnoum said.

"Papoo created an unbelievable atmosphere in his home, in the office, even in the hospital ... It's incredible how he connected with everyone."

### An Ideal Leader

Mourners not only comprised family and friends, but also colleagues who had worked with Sava, and for him, during his distinguished career in education. As executive director of NAESP for 18 years, Sava left a great impression



Samuel G. Sava served as executive director of NAESP from 1981 to 1999. Family, friends, and colleagues came together to honor his life and legacy at his funeral on Oct. 1.

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## Samuel Sava

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on a countless number of people with whom he worked. NAESP colleagues made the trip to Washington, D.C., from as far as Tennessee and Missouri to honor Sava, who was described throughout the service as a caring, generous, genuine, and successful leader.

NAESP President Nancy Davenport was in attendance, as well as past presidents Richard Barbacane, Yvonne Allen, Carole Kennedy, and Fred Brown. Many former and current NAESP staff members also attended, including Executive Director Gail Connelly and former Deputy Executive Director Deborah Reeve.

John Wherry, who partnered with Sava to establish the Parent Institute and the Teacher Institute, worked closely with Sava for 27 years and subsequently developed a strong friendship with him.

"A leader gets things done through other people and Sam knew how to do that," Wherry said. "He remembered their names and he kept track of them. He congratulated them when they were successful and he consoled them when they had problems."

"Sam applied simple, tried, and tested character traits and values to

his work. And he magnified them by applying them consistently day after day," Wherry added.

### An Advocate for Children

Sava began his career in education as a teacher and then a principal in Farrell, Pennsylvania, the town in which he was born and raised. "Sam was destined to become an educator," said Ted Pedas, Sava's lifelong friend. "He saw the importance of educating and uplifting children of poverty ... [and] he was an advocate for children with learning disabilities."

Prior to taking the helm at NAESP in 1981, Sava worked in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, serving as executive officer for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, program officer in the Division of Handicapped Children and Youth, director of personnel training, and director of elementary and secondary research in the U.S. Office of Education. In 1964, he earned a presidential citation for the administration of federal education programs.

Sava left the Department of Education in 1967 to become vice president and executive director of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio, and then senior vice president for programs at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan.

"He had a fantastic career," Wherry said. "But for Sam it was never about his own career, it was never about the honors he received, or even the prestige of the organizations that employed him ... It was the children. He was driven by the clear vision that education is all about the children."

### Leaving Behind a Legacy

"My father's life was a success," George Sava said. "His life was a success by every definition because he had the love and admiration of family and friends. He knew the meaning of life was simply: love."

"He asked for nothing, he was given nothing, but throughout his life, he gave everything," George Sava added.

"Sam Sava has earned what is perhaps the ultimate compliment we can pay to a colleague: He was a good man," Wherry said.

Sava is survived by his wife, two children, and five grandchildren, including a grandson, his namesake, born weeks before Sava's death.

Sava, who served in the U.S. Navy from 1955 to 1958 before joining the Naval Reserve, will be buried Dec. 19 at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

—Vanessa St. Gerard

## Endowing Leadership and Learning

The NAESP Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to securing and stewarding private gifts and grants that benefit the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Since 1981, the NAESP Foundation has worked to promote and advance elementary and middle-level education by supporting and extending the work of NAESP and by incubating innovation, highlighting success, and connecting key stakeholders. Helping NAESP



Michael Schooley, Gail Connelly, Nancy Davenport, and Ernest Mannino with a \$4,000 check representing the \$1,000 contribution they each made to the Friend of the Foundation campaign.

State Affiliates reach their goals and serve all principals is also a critical function of the NAESP Foundation.

Donations made by individuals and organizations interested in becoming a Friend of the NAESP Foundation support professional development programs, product development, and research studies.

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