

VIVA LA LINGUA ITALIANA! The AIAE Celebrates 21st Anniversary

N. C. (May 12, 2018)



On May 4, the Association of Italian American Educators with its President Cav. Josephine A. Maietta celebrated their annual Awards and Scholarship Ceremony at the Consulate General of Italy in New York. An important occasion to highlight the Italian language and culture and to encourage the young generations to keep on studying and nurturing them. Special awardees and guests of the night included Consul General of Italy Francesco Genuardi; Dolores Alfieri, Director of Italian American Affairs, who spoke on behalf of Governor Andrew Cuomo; Former First Lady of NY Matilda Raffa Cuomo; Rev. Msgr. Hilary C. Franco, Advisor Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations; Terry Paladini-Baumgarten, the Founder of the FiDi Lion's Club; Cav. Dott. Joseph A. Guagliardo, President of The Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations and Dott. Mirko M. Notarangelo, Art Director, and Producer for Multimedia Educational Activities.

Introduced by the two celebratory Italian and American National Anthems, sung by Tenor Mauricio Trejo & Soprano Rachel Elizabeth de Trejo with Pianist Alexander Chapilnskiy, the [Association of](#)



[Italian American Educators \(AIAE\)](#) [2] held its 21st Anniversary in the packed atmosphere of New York's "piazza d'Italia", the [Consulate General of Italy in Park Avenue.](#) [3]

Grateful for the commitment to the Italian language and culture, Consul General Francesco Genuardi triumphantly opened the ceremony. "It is a great pleasure to renew our commitment towards Italian language and the AIAE," stated Genuardi honored to award the recipients devoted to education. He then introduced [Cav. Josephine Maietta](#) [4], the President of the AIAE.

President Cav. Josephine A. Maietta on the AIAE's Mission

Maietta described her organization's mission which enhances the Italian American image in academia. The AIAE promotes Italian in schools, colleges, and professional life. The President put the emphasis on the importance of learning a language explaining that it provides the opportunity to learn about a new culture, and to make connections to family roots. Maietta couldn't contain her gratitude for the amount of support that the AIAE receives in terms of funds, and mentorship, and she acknowledges that it is all about working together to achieve such a great end product.

"We try to promote a positive image of the Italian Americans here in the US," said Maietta, "every year we honor distinguished people that have excelled in the Italian American community supporting the study of Italian language and culture. We give scholarships to students in order that they can travel to Italy, because we want them to experience where their ancestors come from. And when they come back we hope that they will continue to study Italian in the universities."

The President speech was followed by a thoughtful and inspirational invocation by [Rev. Msgr. Hilary C. Franco](#) [5], Advisor Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations

The Cuomos and the New York Mentoring Program

[Italian American Governor Andrew Cuomo](#) [6] could not attend this year's ceremony, but he sent [Dolores Alfieri, the Director of Italian American Affairs](#) [7], to speak on his behalf: "Governor Cuomo is very proud of his heritage, and admires the AIAE's work that preserves the literature, language, and art of Italy. He also admires, and appreciates all who are dedicated to this important, educational cause," said Alfieri.

Equally proud was his mother, the [Former First Lady of NY Matilda Raffa Cuomo](#) [8], who was in attendance. Mrs. Cuomo created the [Mentoring USA program](#) [9] that was reinstated in 2014 to help children who are failing in school. She encourages the message that education is essential, and a necessary foundation in a child's life that needs to be maintained.

"You have to keep young people in school, and they have to do the best they can do in school." Said Mrs. Cuomo. "These kids don't have a family, and a family is everything. So if they can have a mentor, one on one, an hour every week for a year, it would change them profoundly, it is incredible how this program transforms them. They learn education, manners and they get their good grades in school. We also brought this program in Italy from Milan to Milazzo in Sicily"

The Awardees

The first award recipient of the night was [Terry Paladini-Baumgarten, the Founder of the FiDi Lion's Club](#) [10]. She received the Woman of the Year Award and was recognized for her excellence in academia and business.

She shared with us her thoughts and her emotions of the night: "I think that are many women who deserve this award tonight, I'm very humble and honored for my accomplishments as a daughter of an Italian family that emigrated from Italy during the first World War. It is important for kids to learn their foreign language to keep our culture alive and our family history. My father taught me always to give back in life and that's what I'm trying to do with the Lion's Club and also with the New York City Mentoring Program. I'm in the Advisory Board and I help Mrs. Matilda Raffa Cuomo, to bring the program not just to the States but around the world. We are working right now with the Lion's club in Italy to embrace Mrs. Cuomo Mentoring Program. My personal mentor is her, Matilda Cuomo, I relate



to her a lot, because she opened the door to these kids and thought of a program that it is just for them and that it is not and it shouldn't be politicized."

The next award winner was [Cav. Dott. Joseph A. Guagliardo](#) [11]. Joseph is the President of The Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations and he received the Leadership and Heritage Award.

"The AIAE is a very important organization, I feel if I'm going into my roots." Said Guagliardo to us. "I graduated from Columbia University, so it takes me back to my educational background. Tonight they honored me I think specifically because we started the push back on the City Council when they were trying to take away Columbus Day in New York. I am the President of the the National Council of Columbia Associations of Civil Service. We were able to gather people together and rally to The City Hall to send the message that Italians are not going to settle for it. This led to a coalition made with the Columbus City Foundation and its Chairman Angelo Vivolo and that is going to continue the fight."

[Mickela Mallozzi](#) [12], the Host and Producer of the 4 time -Emmy Award- Winning show, the "Bare Feet Project", was awarded for her Excellence in the Arts.

The final award of the night for Educational Outreach was received by Dott. Mirko M. Notarangelo who is the Art Director, and Producer for Multimedia Educational Activities.

Scholarship Winners

The scholarship recipients of the Programma Ponte-Pisa include: Mario Vincent, from Queens College received the Gov. Mario Cuomo Memorial Scholarship, Melissa D'Angelo from Queens College received the Ida Corvino & Pino Miletich Memorial Scholarship, Elizabeth D'Angelo from Queens College received the Mike Rienzi Foundation Scholarship, Maria D'Angelo from Queens College received the Anthony Calia Memorial Scholarship, Gaetana D'Auria from Hofstra University received the Mario & Josephine Maietta Scholarship, Giuseppe Fuduli from Quinnipiac University received the Cav. Joseph Coccia Jr. Memorial Scholarship, Sabrina Guglielmo from Pace University received the Giovanni Palandra Memorial Scholarship, and Olivia Rose Manna from SUNY Purchase received the AIAE Scholarship.

The Perfect Catering for a Perfect Celebration

To end the day on a sweet note, the [AICNY - Associazione Italiana Chef New York](#) [13], provided a wonderful catering full of authentic Italian delicacies. The catering guided by Michele Mazza President of the AICNY, was coordinated by [Chef Rosanna Di Michele](#) [14].

More About the AIAE

The Association of Italian American Educators was organized by a group of Italian American teachers and professors to enhance the Italian American image and presence in academia. The AIAE promotes discussion of educational issues impacting Italian Americans, supports formal and pertinent education, facilitates professional development for teachers, sponsors the Programma Ponte Scholarship Program (a course of study in Rome on Contemporary Italy, designed for Italian American college and high school students); and recognizes and presents awards to outstanding Italian American educators and leaders of the community for their achievements in their professions.

For more info please visit the AIAE website here [>>>](#) [2]

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- [10] http://www.nyfinancialdistrictlionsclub.org/NY_Financial_District_Lions_Club/Photo_Gallery/Pages/Phil_Am_Lions.html
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