

# *La Circolettera*

Year-End 2023



**47TH ANNUAL GALA**

THE BREAKERS RESORT, PALM BEACH | APRIL 7, 2024

# VIVA L'ITALIA

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Paul Finizio, President

### CARI AMICI,

Happy Holidays to each and every one of you and your families.

As 2023 comes to a close, it's wonderful to reflect on what a beautiful celebration of our Italian heritage we had. The year was filled with festivals, a Black-Tie Gala at The Breakers, and celebrations of academic accomplishments arising from our relationship with our FAU program led by Ilaria Serra, and many other events arranged and accomplished under the supervision of Rose De Angelis, our program chair.

As we approach 2024 a word that comes to mind is **more!** More education. More culture. More programs. More donations, sponsors and underwriters. More students benefiting from the force of our Partnership at Florida Atlantic University, and throughout Florida. Our founder, Father Maestrini, when he created the circle, surely envisioned all that and more!

Now is the time to mark your calendar for the April 7th Gala fundraiser at the Breakers Hotel. We need your support! Please, as you read this beautiful newsletter, keep in mind how you can join all of us in some way, shape or form to contribute to our efforts.

I, personally, and on behalf of our organization and all in the community with whom we have contact, say and look forward to being with each and every one of you sometime during the year.

Your faithful servant,  
– Paul Finizio



#### The Italian Cultural Society

[Ilcircoloflorida.com](http://Ilcircoloflorida.com)

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Il Circolo is an independent, not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization, legally incorporated in the State of Florida. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Il Circolo, the Italian Cultural Society of Florida, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and was created in 1976 with the mission to preserve and promote Italian Culture in South Florida through educational outreach and special events. To fulfill this mission, the organization each year produces a robust schedule of special events that focus on Italian art, music, culture and Italian food and wine. In addition, Il Circolo gives support to college students to study in Italy and provides funding to local school organizations that promote Italian culture, including Florida Atlantic University, Palm Beach Opera, Palm Beach Atlantic University, St. Paul Academy and St. Andrew's School.

**ANTONELLA BRANCACCIO-BALZANO**

Antonella was born, raised and educated in Naples in a traditional *familgia Napoletana*. In 2005, holding a JD from *Università degli Studi Federico II* in Naples, she moved to Florida to pursue legal studies at the University of Miami. In 2014 she founded Brancaccio Associates which specializes in immigration and international law.

She and her spouse, Domenic, have 3 beautiful and accomplished children who are being raised according to Italian values and traditions and speak Italian at home.

A Board Member of *Il Circolo* since 2014, Antonella has also co-chaired the 2018, 2020 and 2022 anniversary Galas, as well as being an early proponent of *L'Apertivo*, a cocktail initiative to introduce young professionals to *Il Circolo* and its mission.

She also sponsors outreach to other Italian-American and international organizations, and their respective governments, saying ... "We all support each other and collaborate on many levels." Additionally, she serves as Honorary Consul of Italy assisting the community in Orlando and considers all of this a great experience, enriching her professionally and personally.

Exchange Programs with Sister Cities in Italy is another endeavor she supports and recently participated in the finalized 'Sister City' agreement between Ercolano (a small city near Naples) and Pompano Beach, thanks to the efforts of fellow board member Tony Philips.

Going forward, Antonella believes "*Il Circolo* has critical importance. Our mission is to keep Italian values alive. Without our activities, many people, most especially the young people, would not even know about Italian culture. This is the core of our mission."

Grazie mille to Antonella for all her endeavors supporting and promoting *Il Circolo*'s mission and her attention to bringing in a new and energetic level of members who may some day be our future board members and advocates of our now almost 48 year-old mission.



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even know about Italian culture.  
  
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## 47TH ANNUAL GALA HONOREES



### HONOREE

**Robert E. Carlucci** is the founder of The RC Group. He has been a leader in the food service industry his entire career, and a multi-state real estate developer and operator of Yum Brands Taco Bell, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Pizza Hut for more than 30 years.

In Massachusetts he started Robert's Food and Vending Service Company before relocating to Maryland where he joined BCS, a food service company, as CEO. Bob was the founder of Co-Operative Refreshment Centers, and was a co-founder of Bay National Bank where he served as an Executive Board Member and Vice Chairman.

Professional service to organizations includes Taco Bell Ad Hoc Board Member of the Franchise Management Advisory Council (FRANMAC), Vice-Chairman of YUM Brand KFC Government Affairs, President of the Washington D.C. Taco Bell and KFC Co-Op's, President of the KFC North East Franchisee Association, and President of the Maryland-Washington D.C. Vending Association.

Philanthropy plays an important role in both Bob and his wife Aileen's lives as well as in the lives of their adult children, Christina and Dominic. He chaired The United Way Campaign of Anne Arundel County, Maryland, and served on the Board of Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts. He has served as Director, Dinner Chairman, and currently serves as Chairman of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF). Bob established The Carlucci Entrepreneurship Forum at the American University of Rome where he was a former board member and trustee.



Bob has had the honor of being recognized for his philanthropic work by several organizations. In 2017, he was awarded The Ellis Island Medal of Honor. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters Honoris Causa by The American University of Rome, and he was knighted by The Sacred Military Order of St. George. The prestigious Lido Civic Club of Washington, D.C. named Bob Businessman of the Year, and he received The Mattie J.T. Stepanek Heart Songs Award from The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Washington D.C./ Maryland.

In 2023, Bob was named a Cavaliere (Knight) in Italy's Order of Merit by the Italian government for his many years of dedicated service to the Italian American community and his leadership of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF).

## 47TH ANNUAL GALA HONOREES



### HONOREE

**John Flora** was born into a poor family of tailors in Bari, Italy. Impoverished and speaking no English, his family emigrated to America on December 17, 1962 and he grew up in the predominately Italian neighborhood of Bensonhurst in Brooklyn, NY.

While initially pursuing an education in Electrical Engineering, he looked for part-time work to earn money and began working in Villa Cucci Bakery, not realizing that this was the start of his food career.

It was while vacationing in Miami Beach that John realized he loved the Sunshine State, but he could not find authentic pizza anywhere. This led him to purchase a piece of property at Flagler and 79th Street in Miami and, shortly thereafter, Flora's Drive-In pizza parlor opened in 1972.

The success of the pizza parlor fueled an expansion to Flora's Italian Restaurant in Hollywood, FL. Tourists and locals alike began to know the restaurant as the place for authentic Italian food, with ingredients sourced directly from Italy. Soon, the competition took note and when other restaurants began asking about acquiring the same Italian ingredients, John began Flora Foods, his restaurant supply business.

Today, after 40 years in business, Flora Fine Foods remains a family business with headquarters in Coral Springs, FL, in a 60,000 square foot distribution facility servicing supermarkets, Italian grocers and specialty food stores across the country. John and Mrs. Flora still work there every day, and John still visits Italy to source genuine Italian ingredients for authentic Italian cooking. To this day only the best can bear the Flora name.

### HONOREE

**Salvatore D'Amico**, CEO of Privaira Private Aviation, boasts an illustrious career marked by exceptional accomplishments within the aviation industry.

Since assuming the helm of Privaira in August 2014, Sal has exemplified visionary executive leadership, steering the company with unparalleled expertise, strategic acumen, and robust aviation experience.

From his first affiliation as Chief Operating Officer, Sal orchestrated pivotal facets of the company's operations, overseeing Flight Operations, Maintenance, Dispatch, and Material Services, building his indispensable role in shaping Privaira's trajectory.

With a tenure in the aviation realm that spans over 35 years, Sal's professional footprint resonates across diverse senior roles encompassing 121, 135, and 145 operations.

His career includes the pivotal stewardship of a major OEM's service center, where his visionary strategies and operational finesse left an indelible mark on the industry. Before his tenure at Privaira, Sal capitalized on his FAA certified A&P license, leveraging his profound expertise to establish and successfully run an aviation consultancy firm, further solidifying his reputation as a trailblazer in the field.

Beyond his remarkable professional achievements, Sal remains deeply committed to preserving and fostering his Italian heritage. His dedication shines through his affiliation and unwavering support for Il Circolo, an organization dedicated to celebrating Italian culture. His selection as a Gala Honoree stands as a testament to his exceptional contributions and unwavering commitment to honoring his roots.

Sal, his wife Tracy, and their family are thrilled for his recognition by Il Circolo.





## 47TH ANNUAL GALA

### SPONSOR LEVELS

#### PRESENTING SPONSOR \$30,000

One (1) named Italian Studies Scholarship  
Two-page center spread program book ad  
Fourteen (14) seats with premier seating  
Name or Logo linked to [ilcircolofflorida.org](http://ilcircolofflorida.org) for one year  
One Lifetime Family Membership to Il Circolo

#### PLATINUM SPONSOR \$20,000

Full page program book ad: back or inside cover  
Twelve (12) seats with premier seating  
Name or logo linked to [ilcircolofflorida.org](http://ilcircolofflorida.org) for one year

#### GOLD SPONSOR \$15,000

Full-page program book ad: back or inside cover  
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#### SILVER SPONSOR \$10,000

Full page program book ad  
Eight (8) seats with priority seating  
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#### DESSERT SPONSOR: \$5,000

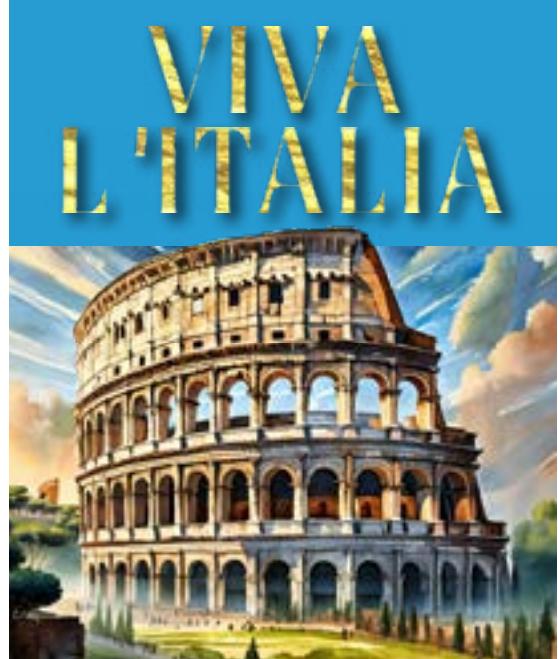
Name and Logo appear on event digital marketing campaign  
(e-marketing, social media, etc.)  
Name and Logo appear in the program book and slides during the ceremony  
Recognition from the dais  
Full page ad in published event magazine

#### COCKTAIL SPONSOR: \$7,500

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#### INDIVIDUAL TICKETS

Member: \$750.00 | Non-Member: \$850

Purchase online at [ilcircolofflorida.org](http://ilcircolofflorida.org)

Visa, MasterCard, American Express,  
Discover

Questions? [admin@ilcircolofflorida.org](mailto:admin@ilcircolofflorida.org)  
or **561-200-6300**

**INCREDIBLE ITALIAN ADVENTURE**

3 nights in  
4-star hotel,  
includes 2 round-trip  
coach tickets

**\$100 per ticket or  
four (4) for \$300**

Need not be present to win  
Drawing: April 7, 2024

## FAU ITALIAN STUDIES

This Fall the FAU Italian Program presented a *Federico Fellini Retrospective* (6 movies by the maestro with presentations and discussion) ending with Yale University's Prof. Millicent Marcus' keynote address.

In October, FAU President Stacy Volnick welcomed the new Italian Consul Michele Mistò. It was the first time the new consul visited Palm Beach County and the FAU campus. Also shown in photo is Michael Horswell, Dean of Arts & Letters and Paul Finizio.



**Ilaria Serra**

Professor of Italian and Comparative Studies

Orianna Soublette (below right), an Il Circolo scholarship recipient for study in Venice, presented her Undergraduate research project on photographer Luigi Ferrigno. In photo, she is accompanied by Margherita Oselladore (left), a student from the University of Padua, who came to FAU for Political Science internship organized by the Italian program.

Our Italian Club "Insieme" won a \$1500 grant from the NIAF On Campus Program.



### Spring Invitations to FAU:

- *Italy in Lyrics* class taught by Ilaria Serra (Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-1:50) is open to 60+ auditors. ITT3600
- Our annual "*Italy in Transit*" International Symposium is scheduled for February 9-10. We will have a session on the history of Italian puppets and pupi, with professors Federico Pacchioni (Chapman University) and Jo Ann Cavallo (Columbia) plus a puppet show on Friday night. Saturday is a day full of interesting research presentations, capped by the immersive experience of the first Italian opera, *Orfeo* by Monteverdi, performed by dancers, singers and a team of musicians from Conservatorio Puccini in La Spezia, IT.

The Italian Consul General in Miami has confirmed his presence at the opening. You don't want to miss this annual event that brings a lively celebration of Italian culture, food, and arts to our campus.

We always welcome help for hosting or entertaining our national and international guests. Actually, this generous hospitality is what we are renowned for ... *Grazie!*

## SEASON EVENTS

**Italian Festival on the Beach** is a very popular event that grows each year. Live music from Italy, dancing, food trucks and all things Italiano!



At the **Italian Heritage Lunch** in Porto Bella Restaurant 3 members, 100 years of age (or in their 99th year), were introduced and at the same time a new family and potential future member who required a high chair were welcomed. This is Il Circolo!



## SEASON EVENTS

**Summer Lunch at Café Sapori** was a very well-attended fun time with the usual top notch food and even a spontaneous tarantella by some members who were inspired by the music.



**Welcome Back Lunch**, an annual event considered the official start of season with live music, speakers, announcements, at Benvenuto.



## SEASON EVENTS

**Christmas Party at Boca West** is always a festive occasion with live music and an elaborate Italian buffet luncheon.



### When Sally Met Tony ... 2 legends, both from Astoria.



Spirale Dorate

September 16 at 8:00 AM

We are very happy to share with you some wonderful news from a few months ago: Last May 17, the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella conferred Professor Itaria Serra with the honor of Knight of the Order of the "Star of Italy". We are proud of Itaria, of her success, her skills and her commitment to promoting Italian culture. Itaria is Professor of Italian and Comparative Studies at the University of Boca Raton, Florida; she is also the coordinator of the FAU Italian Program (Florida Atlantic University) and is one of the founders of the Golden Weeks. Congratulations Itaria!

The illustration is by Massimo Carulli.



Tony Phillips, President of Pompano Beach Sister Cities, with Il Circolo members and friends. (L-R) Patricia Cavallini, Norma Phillips, Tony Phillips, Silvana Gargiulo, Director of International Relations City of Sorrento, Antonella Balzano-Brancaccio, Augusto Cavallini, Paul Finizio, Paolo Mangia.

#### **Official visit to all three Sister Cities in Italy.**

Sorrento was first with a visit to Mayor Massimo Coppola, followed by a visit to Sorrento Elementary School which is in a partnership with Pompano Beach Elementary School for a Writing Exchange Program. Also visited Sant Anna Institute, an FAU partner.

Ercolano was to visit with Mayor Ciro Buonajuto and Ercolano Elementary School which also partners with another Pompano Beach Elementary School.

Termoli, Pompano's first Sister City in 2018, where they visited with Mayor Vincenzo Ferrazzano, the Catabbo Winery and several other businesses.

Greater Pompano Beach Sister Cities is a non-profit organization and open to anyone who wishes to join.flower makes them more feminine."



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Visa, MasterCard, American Express,  
Discover

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or **561-200-6300**

A graphic featuring a red, white, and green ribbon twisted into a loop, resembling the colors of the Italian flag.

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