



Honoring Italian American Women @ the 2014 NOIAW Gala

Natasha Lardera (May 14, 2014)



NOIAW is the premier organization for women of Italian heritage that is committed to preserving Italian heritage, language and culture by promoting and supporting the advancement of women of Italian ancestry through education programs. At their annual gala they honored Lisa Lemole Oz, welcomed new chair Patricia Martone and raised funds for more cultural exchanges.

"I've been on the [NOIAW](#) [2], the only national membership organization for women of Italian ancestry, board for many years. Several years ago we became a national organization, and I think that's been a very exciting development for us.

At the end of December I have retired from my full-time law practice and I still practice law but now I have the time to give the proper attention to this organization. I hope to see us grow and have the opportunity to have more cultural programs in regions around the country, to provide more



scholarships, to continue our cultural exchange with Italy, which I think is important, and to just harness the energy of all our constituents and see that more younger women join us.”

This is what [Patricia Martone](#) [3], Chair Elect of the National Organization of Italian American Women (NOIAW) told i-Italy during their 2014 Gala, held at the St. Regis, honoring writer and producer [Lisa Lemole Oz](#) [4]. Mistress of ceremonies and auctioneer was [Ornella Fado](#) [5].

“NOIAW, which was founded in 1980 under the leadership of Dr. [Aileen Riotto](#) [6] Sirey and a small group of Italian American women, is the premier organization for women of Italian heritage that is committed to preserving Italian heritage, language and culture by promoting and supporting the advancement of women of Italian ancestry. NOIAW serves its members through cultural programs and networking opportunities, and supports young women through nationally acclaimed scholarship, mentoring and cultural exchange programs.”

“Both of my parents had recently passed away and I felt like I was really getting out of touch with my roots because I didn't have many living relatives,” Chair Martone continues, “And so a friend of mine suggested that I get in contact with NOIAW so that I could continue to be with people of Italian background and enjoy it. My father's family was from a small town in the Campania region, my mother's family was not Italian but she was really good at cooking Italian food for me and the atmosphere at home was very Italian.”

Mrs. Martone's reason for joining NOIAW is not so different from the reasons behind the membership of many other women of varied professional backgrounds who want to stay connected with their roots. At the gala doctors, lawyers, artists, nurses, educators, writers and women of all professions came together to celebrate the organization's accomplishments, to raise funds for the development and implementation of programs such as scholarship programs, cultural exchange programs and social and networking opportunities.

“As we celebrate our organization's accomplishments,” Betty Santangelo, departing NOIAW's Chair, said “this year we are proud to honor visionary Lisa Lemole Oz. Partnering with her husband, Dr. Mehmet Oz, she actively promotes patient empowerment, transforming the lives of consumers with vital and practical information about living healthy, well-balanced lives via radio and TV segments, articles and books. She's an authentic and inspiring role model to the next generation of Italian American women.”

“I am deeply moved to be honored by this outstanding organization,” Oz said after being introduced by last year's gala honoree, Donatella Arpaia, “it effectively draws upon the best of our Italian heritage and culture while supporting the educational and professional advancement of Italian American women. My life's mission is to improve quality of life and to educate people on how to do it. I've been to places where the men made the speeches and the women made coffee. But it's the women who keep culture alive, together we can accomplish more and more.”

NOIAW has been collaborating with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) on an annual exchange program since 2007. The program brought Italian college women to the United States in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013. In 2008, 2010 and 2012 MAE hosted a group of Italian American women in Rome for a similar experience. “The contribution of Italian Americans to the city of New York and to the US has been enormous but that of Italian American women has been even grander,” Hon. Consul General Natalia Quintavalle told i-Italy. “NOIAW is the only organization that works in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which I represent, for the exchange of female students. They set a good example for other organizations, proving that partnering with Italian institutions can be successful.”

At the gala Vice Chair Maria Vullo presented the cultural and educational programs, while Jay Hershenson Senior Vice Chancellor of CUNY received the Friend of NOIAW Award. Hershenson could not stress enough how important the organization's commitment to education is and how their effort is a continuous work in progress.

“My dream would be to see the organization growing,” Chair Martone concluded, “We have some very active regions, in places like Rhode Island, Connecticut, Long Island, here in New York. I'd like to



see those regions grow stronger and get them to be more involved with the people in New York, so to help more and more young women. Basically building on our strengths and growing.”

Last but not least, at the end of such wonderful night all the guests were given a gift bag including, among many other surprises, a box of Pasta De Cecco, the real and authentic pasta of the Italian tradition in the world, since 1886. Find out the De Cecco's way to make and conceive pasta [>>>](#) [7]

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