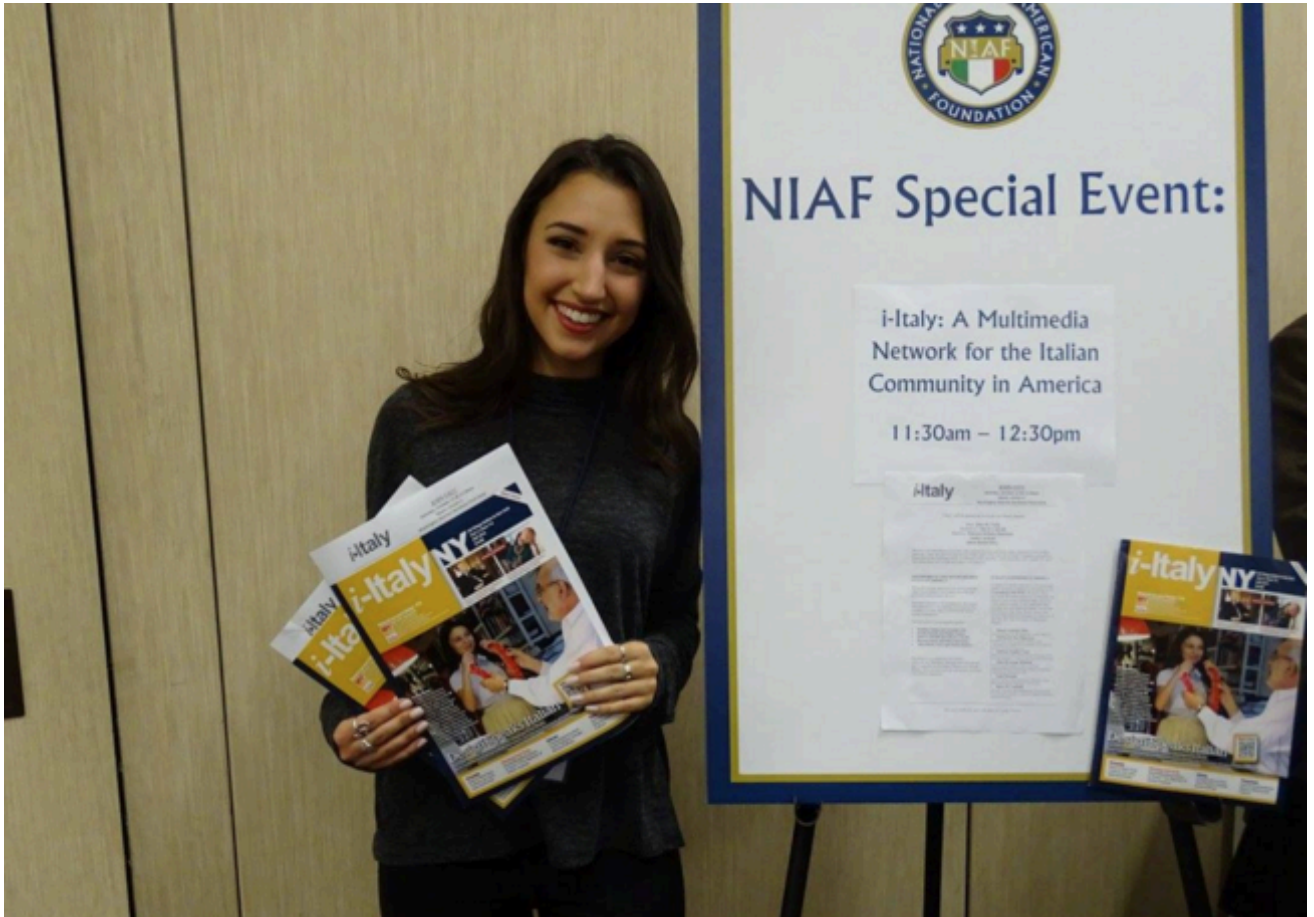




The Italian-American Community and i-Italy

Alex Catti (October 21, 2016)



The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) gala was held on October 15th at the Wardman Park Marriot in Washington D.C. During the day an “Expo” of all-things-Italian was held on the Marriot’s lower level. i-Italy was present, and its co-founders - Letizia Airos and Ottorino Cappelli - presented the company’s current projects and future aspirations. Host: John M. Viola; Moderator: John D. Calvelli; Panelists: Patricia DeStacy Harrison, Linda Carlozzi, Aileen Riotto Sirey.

President of [NIAF](#) [2], [John Viola](#) [3], kicked off i-Italy’s presentation. He enlightened the audience about the ever-growing partnership between NIAF and i-Italy. Viola also stressed the importance of showing the younger generation how to keep the Italian culture alive within the United States.

Next co-founder and editor of i-Italy, Ottorino Cappelli, took the floor and stated i-Italy’s mission: to cover anything Italian happening in America. He announced that in a continuing effort to cover the



Italian culture in America, the magazine will be going national in 2017. It will be distributed in cities that have an Italian consulate or an Italian cultural institute, a major step for the promotion of the Italian culture in other parts of the country. [Consulate General of Italy](#) [4] in New York, [Francesco Genuardi](#) [5], also gave his endorsement (via video) of i-Italy and its mission.

Transitioning from the future to the present, the i-Italy team presented some of the work they're currently doing on their television show, which airs every Sunday at 1:00 PM on the [NYC Life channel](#) [6]. One program is called "Grandparents and Grandchildren in Italian America," where grandparents and their grandchildren share family stories of "italianità." The second series is called "Italian Leadership in America." Co-produced with NIAF, this series highlights how much the Italian-American community has achieved - in so many different halls of power - in the nation's capital. It also highlights that even the most accomplished Italian Americans are willing to share their Italian stories and acknowledge that their heritage is at the core of who they are.

The last video shown was one promoting the Italian language. This year is the 16th annual "Settimana della Lingua Italiana nel Mondo - Italian Language Week." To celebrate the event, at the behest of Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Direzione Generale per la promozione del sistema paese, i-Italy and the Italian Cultural Institute of New York have collaborated on the promotional video "[Il Design parla Italiano - Design Speaks Italian](#)" [7].

To conclude the event, a panel discussion was held. John D. Calvelli, a student who is only 17 years old, moderated the panel. He began by speaking about how grateful he is to have known all four of his grandparents, and he also is thrilled to have had the opportunity to participate in i-Italy's "[Grandparents and Grandchildren in Italian America.](#)" [8] He states that the program "[...] is an everlasting testament, or a time capsule of sorts to our Italian history, a world of a wave of immigrants that is slowly disappearing before our eyes as we Italian Americans become farther and farther removed from it." Calvelli believes that programs like this need continued support because they not only record cultural history, but they also promote cross-cultural understanding.

The first panelist to speak was [Dr. Aileen Riotto Sirey](#) [9]. She co-founded the [National Organization of Italian American Women \(NOIAW\)](#) [10] along with Geraldine Ferraro who was the first Italian American to be on a presidential ticket (Ferraro-Mondale 1980). Sirey was featured with her granddaughter Emma Bankier on i-Italy's "Grandparents and Grandchildren in Italian America." Sirey expressed regret that she only had one conversation with her own grandmother about her grandmother's childhood, but she is appreciative of the chance to have a conversation with Emma.

Linda Carlozzi addressed the audience next. An active member of the Italian-American community for over thirty years, she was one of the first recipients of the NIAF Law Scholarship, served on the board of directors for NOIAW, is a member of NIAF, the Columbus Citizens' Foundation, and the Columbian Lawyers of New York. For the past 15 years she served as the Director of the Italian Welfare League (IWL). Carlozzi is a first generation Italian American. She never had the chance to meet her grandparents, but one of her next door neighbors, Angela Maria, raised her and taught her how to speak an Italian dialect. Carlozzi states, "I didn't realize this incredible gift from literally my next door neighbor." As a young girl, she never understood what it meant to be Italian American, but after attending Fordham and meeting other Italian Americans, she began to recognize her cultural heritage and how important it is for the younger generations to maintain this heritage. She was a founding member of an Italian-American organization called "FIERI" at Fordham. After moving to Philadelphia in 1991 she met Matthew DiDomenico who was her mentor and sponsor; Carlozzi largely credits DiDomenico for her nomination to the NIAF board of directors.



Patricia DeStacy Harrison, the Vice Chair of NIAF and the CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was the final panelist to offer her thoughts. As the CEO of the CPB and in order to strengthen the media for the public's benefit, she made investments in three important areas: digital (technology and innovation funding), dialogue (local community partnerships and service) and diversity (within the realms of content, talent, and service). DeStacy was also interviewed for i-Italy's "Grandparents and Grandchildren in Italian America" program. She believes that being aware of one's cultural roots, in this case Italian roots, is important because "[...] it is a reinforcement of what it means to have a moral compass, to be connected to a heritage that had so many challenges, and yet [know] what it [means] to enjoy yourself [...]"

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[1] <http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/niafi-italypresentationpng-0>

[2] <http://www.niaf.org/>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/johnmviola>

[4] http://www.consnewyork.esteri.it/consolato_newyork/en/

[5] http://www.consnewyork.esteri.it/consolato_newyork/it/il_consolato/il_console/il_console.html

[6] <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/media/index.page>

[7] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW9UrjXhEc8>

[8] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaclwlrillc>

[9] <http://www.niaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Dr-Aileen-Sirey-bio.pdf>

[10] <http://www.noiaaw.org/>