

NOIAW Founder and Chairwoman to Retire

(January 30, 2012)



After 32 years of service to the Italian American Community, Dr. Aileen Riotto Sirey submitted her retirement notice to the board of the National Organization of Italian American Women, effective May 5, 2012, the date of its annual luncheon. NOIAW is the premier nationwide membership group for Italian American women

Dr. Sirey organized the first meeting of the [NOIAW](#) [2]organization with a small group of women at her home on July 14, 1980 upon the suggestion of the late Hon. Geraldine Ferraro. Among the founding members who attended and have remained with the organization through out were: Matilda Cuomo who gave the name to the group, as well as newswoman Roseanne Colletti, playwright Donna DeMatteo and law professor Bonnie Mandina.

Dr. Sirey was elected the first President in 1980, serving in that position for seven years. For the next 25 years she served NOIAW as its Chairwoman. Upon retirement on May 5th, Dr. Sirey will be given the title of Founder and Chair Emerita.



"Its time..." says Dr. Sirey. "We have a phenomenal board, and over the past several years we have expanded geographically at an amazing rate. In the years to come, I will help in any way I can. Betty Santangelo, our Chair Elect, will be my successor and she is an excellent choice."

While studying for her doctorate in psychology, Dr Sirey's focused on culture and ethnic origin as significant factors in personality development. Her work shows that the history, and culture of a people profoundly effects behavior, values, attitudes and perception as well as social interaction. "The shared history and basic belief systems of an ethnic group are etched into the emotional system of each child," she says, "by parents who, consciously or not, teach their children what they believe."

Her Ethnotherapy group research project showed that participants gained a measurable increase in self-esteem and "group identity" when they explored their ethnic issues.

Dr. Sirey has taught in both high school and college and was a health care administrator before devoting the rest of her professional career to psychotherapy in private practice. She is a recipient of numerous awards and honors and is a Cavaliere and Commendatore in the Order of Merit in the Republic of Italy. Dr. Sirey has served on the board of the National Italian American Foundation for ten years and became its first woman Vice President and Vice Chair. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Council of Presidents of Italian American Organizations.

The National Organization of Italian Women is one of the nation's four major Italian American organizations and the only membership organization for women. Its mission is to preserve the culture, history and language of Italian Americans and provides a support network for the professional, educational advancement and aspirations of its members. Networking and professional and education opportunities are provided through a variety of programs. In addition, scholarships, mentors and an exchange program with Italy are provided for college age women.

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