



**LIGHTS! CAMERAS! ACTION! STARS for NIAF 40th ANNIVERSARY GALA WEEKEND—OCTOBER 16-18 in D.C.**

(October 06, 2015)



Celebrities and entertainment take center stage during the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) 40th Anniversary Gala Awards Weekend to celebrate a milestone at its new venue at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, October 16 -18, 2015. “For our 40th Anniversary and first year at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, we are really excited to present a new, unique version of our annual weekend. This year is all about recognizing incredible honorees, providing our guests with constant entertainment and celebrations, and making sure we welcome Italian Americans interested in NIAF into our family,” NIAF President John M. Viola said.

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As part of NIAF’s lineup of celebrities, actors Danny Aiello, Chazz Palminteri and Annabella Sciorra; singer and songwriter Giada Valenti; performer Tom Sinatra; The Washington Chorus; The Sicilian Tenors, Aaron Caruso, Elio Scaccio and Sam Vitale, will join Il Volo tenors Piero Barone and Ignazio Boschetto, and baritone Gianluca Ginoble, as part of the weekend performances.

Back by popular demand, the Foundation’s Friday evening extravaganza will feature SNL legend, NIAF Celebrity Ambassador, actor, entertainer and radio host Joe Piscopo and celebrity guests for a celebration of Frank Sinatra’s 100th birthday. Piscopo will honor the legacy of Frank Sinatra with the



crooner's celebrated melodies from his songbook. Piscopo will also serve as this year's co-host of the Foundation's black-tie Gala with NIAF Board member and Emmy Award-winning Fox News Anchor and Global Markets Editor Maria Bartiromo. They will also be on hand to greet everyone at the "After Hours Party" following the Gala.

Also on Friday evening, renowned mixologist Gina Chersevani, owner of Buffalo and Bergen, with an all-star roster of the nation's top Italian American bartenders, will create signature NIAF cocktails for the evening. Special to the evening is live and silent auctions including Italian luxury items and trips to Italy.

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This year's Gala honorees include Amato L. Berardi, founder of Berardi & Associates Inc., and former member of the Italian Parliament, who will receive the NIAF 40th Anniversary Award for Leadership and Service; Richard E. Caruso, Ph.D., founder and director of Integra Life Sciences, who will receive the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Business and Health; Connie Francis, Italian American musical legend, who will be inducted into the Italian American Hall of Fame; Mario Gabelli, founder, chairman and CEO of GAMCO Investors Inc., who will receive the NIAF 40th Anniversary Award for Leadership and Service; Sergio Marchionne, CEO of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles N.V., who will receive the NIAF Special Achievement Award in International Business;

Franco Nuschese, president of Georgetown Entertainment Group LLC, who will receive the NIAF 40th Anniversary Award for Leadership and Service; Steve Perillo, president and owner of Perillo Tours, who will receive the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Business; Alfred M. Rotondaro, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and former NIAF Executive Director, who will receive the Italian American Community Leadership Award; and Josephine J. (Gargiulo) Templeton, M.D., trustee of the John Templeton Foundation, who will receive the NIAF Special Achievement Award in Philanthropy.

One of the largest Italian festivals in the nation's capital, Expo Italiana will showcase the best of Italy with the finest Italian food and specialties, wine, fashion and culture on Saturday. The free and open-to-the-public Expo will feature beer sampling, wine tasting, cooking demos, Italian Sports Cars, and pop-up luxury stores. David Greco, owner of the world-famous Mike's Deli of Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, N.Y., will prepare old-fashioned Italian sandwiches and other specialties as a complimentary lunch. Guests can play bocce indoors on a court set up by Pinstripes of Georgetown. Children can meet La Fata Italiana (The Italian Fairy), who will present a musical learning program. The fun, interactive performance will teach Italian language and culture through song and dance.

Vendors will present new Italian brands as well as top-of-the-line products from Italy in pop-up boutiques. See the latest Italian luxury cars; sample Peroni Nastro Azzurro beer, enjoy espresso at Lavazza Café; sip Limoncello, one of Italy's most popular liqueurs; and indulge in Dolce Gelati.

There will be an exciting auction preview during Expo Italiana. Guests can bid on vacations in Rome and along Italy's Amalfi Coast, including Sorrento, or take home the latest Ferragamo handbag. For book lovers, a collection of illustrated books published by Rizzoli, including "Giorgio Armani," written by the award-winning fashion designer; "Maserati: The Evolution of Style" and a library of Italian cookbooks from The Silver Spoon Kitchen donated by Phaidon, will be available to take home.

Additional highlights during the day on Saturday include an IALC Leadership Forum addressing the issues surrounding Columbus Day; and NIAF- Ieri, Oggi, Domani conference discussing the "State of the Community." Friday afternoon features "Il Viaggio dell'altra Italia" (Tale of the other Italy), a film screening about Italian emigration presented by Rai Italia.

Visit [www.niaf/40](http://www.niaf/40) [2] for a complete listing of activities during NIAF's Gala Weekend.



For more information about Expo Italiana, contact Stephanie Gordon at [202/939-3107](tel:2029393107) [3]. For the ticketed NIAF Wine Tasting & Antipasti, contact Xavier Atizol at [202-939-3100](tel:2029393100) [4] or for events and ticket information for NIAF's 40th Anniversary Awards Gala Weekend, visit [www.niaf.org/40](http://www.niaf.org/40) [5]

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the heritage and culture of Americans of Italian descent.

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