



CASA HONORS TIRELESS LEADER AS WOMAN OF THE YEAR



Casa Italia will honor tireless community leader Jo Ann Serpico as Woman of the Year at its Golden Anniversary Gala on Feb. 8 at Belvedere Banquets in Elk Grove Village.

“Jo Ann has been a pillar of the community for decades,” says Casa Chairman Peter Volpe. “We’re so lucky to have her as a board member, and we’re so honored that she has agreed to be our Woman of the Year.”

Jo Ann has been immersed in the activities of the community since birth, thanks to the unwavering involvement of her father, Joseph R. Salerno. “My father was a member of every Italian society, club and lodge in the Chicago area,” she fondly recalls. “It’s only natural that I followed his example of promoting Italian values and traditions.”

One of the founders of the Rosario D. Salerno Sons Funeral Homes, he was an early organizer of the Chicago-area Italian-American community, a member of the Selective Service Board, the founder of the Roosevelt Loan Co. and candidate for the Illinois Senate.

He was one of the founders of the Italian Welfare Council, the precursor of the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans, and he helped to create an Italian-American summer camp in Pistakee Bay where Jo Ann and her sisters, Rosaria and Theresa, spent the summers.

Jo Ann graduated from St. Mary’s High School, attended Marquette University, and graduated from Worsham College of Mortuary Science. She married Philip Serpico in 1961 and raised three children — Philip, Joseph and Christopher. Before long, Jo Ann became involved in Elmwood Park, where she and her husband made their home.

Over the decades, she has served as a village trustee and Leyden Township Republican committeewoman and precinct captain, and she has held leadership positions in the Elm School PTA and the Elmwood Park Women’s Club, Infant Welfare Society and Friends of the Library.

Jo Ann served as a village health inspector before embarking on a 25-year career as a health facility surveyor for the Illinois Department of Public Health. She received a bachelor of science in public service administration, earning registration as a sanitarian and certification as an environmental health practitioner and



JO ANN SERPICO

Executive Director
Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans

environmental health specialist.

In 1990, she became a member of the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans and rose through the ranks to become its second woman president. She has served as the executive director of the JCCIA since 2010. Jo Ann is also a past president of the Calabresi in America Organization and Maroons Ladies Club, past secretary of the Italo American Soccer and Social Club “Maroons” and the Italian American War Veterans Joseph Gentile Post 2.

A perennial attendee at dinner dances across the Chicago area and throughout the year, she is an active member of the Italian American Women’s Organization; Italian American War Veterans Guido Belmonte Post 4 Auxiliary; JCCIA Women’s Division and West Suburban Women’s Division; Società San Francesco di Paola; and an honorary member of the

Italian American Executives of Transportation.

Jo Ann chaired the 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 JCCIA Man of the Year Dinner Dance and the 2003, 2005 and 2006 Italian Cultural Center’s Person of the Year Dinner Dance. She is a founding member of the Casa Italia board of directors and served as corporate secretary in 2003 and 2004.

Jo Ann has been honored by the Italo American Soccer and Social Club “Maroons,” Italian American Executives of Transportation, Cook County Board President John Stroger, Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas, Illinois Department of Public Health, Cook County Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown, JCCIA Women’s Division, Order Sons of Italy in America State Grand Lodge, Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, Italian American Police Association, Comune di Campofelice di Roccella, Provincia di Palermo, the Italian American Political Coalition and the Comboni Missionaries.

In 2018, the president of Italy inducted her into the ranks of the Cavaliere dell’Ordine della Stella d’Italia in recognition of her many contributions to the community, and in 2019, Pappas designated her an Honorary Deputy Cook County Treasurer.

All that she has done, she has done for her father. “I imagine him looking down on me from heaven and feeling a sense of pride that his daughter was able to achieve what he once did so long ago.”