

Casa Italia

Joseph A. Russo, from Cicero, IL Was born on March 5, 1969 to Orlando and the late Henrietta Russo, both immigrants of Rende (CS) Calabria, Italy. As a young boy, I always enjoyed spending time with my family, aunts and uncles learning more about my Italian, Calabrese Heritage. Listening to all of the stories about my parent's families living thru much harder times as children in Calabria. As I was growing up, I began feeling the need to significantly make an impact in the world. I wanted my life to have meaning, sense of accomplishment and I wanted to make a difference in the world leaving behind a legacy of remembrance for the small parts I've played in people's lives. As a teenager, I found the world of Funeral Directing & Embalming to be my calling to accomplish these cravings.

In my late teens I worked with a few funeral directors' learning the art of embalming and funeral directing. By September of 1991, I graduated from Worsham College of Mortuary Science, Wheeling, IL. At the age of 21 I began working in the funeral trade industry until 1995 when I started my own Company, Russo Funeral Service. Then for the next 20 years I excelled in the art of embalming and restorative art in the Chicagoland metropolitan areas. During that time, I was honored to join the Rosario D. Salerno Family Funeral Homes, in Chicago and Roselle. I spent 18 of my 20 years in the trade Industry growing my Private Funeral Directing practice under the Guidance of my mentor the Late Joseph G. Salerno. I learned many things from Joe in becoming a funeral director, and will never forget our one-on-one talks about how funerals are changing in the future. He was a true pioneer in his own rite! I will forever be grateful to Joe and his family for allowing me the opportunity to become the Funeral Director I am today. Joe Salerno's memory will forever be in my life, and I will always remember him as "One of the Finest"!!!

By the age of 38, along with my loving wife Josephine and my beautiful daughter Giuliana Bella, I acquired a three-acre parcel of land in Hillside, Illinois. My vision was to transform this property into a landmark monumental funeral home. I wanted to create the "Taj Mahal" of funeral homes. My vision has always been, the best way to see the future is to create it, and so I did.

I abandoned the traditional living room ambiance of "mom & pop" funeral homes and created an upscale hotel style lobby atmosphere for people to enjoy under sad and unfortunate times. My vision was inspired by the architecture of an airy grandeur of Piazza San Marco in Venice, Italy as well as the palatial opulence of Caesar's Palace and Venetian Hotels in Las Vegas.

The construction of this project could never have been started or completed without the guidance, help and support of Sam Palumbo/Orange Crush Construction Company and Sam "JR" Palumbo who was truly the driving force that over saw the day-to-day decisions and problem solving through the complete construction process. JR Palumbo was a constant angel on my shoulders and constantly maintained light at the end of the tunnel for me when I felt in complete darkness. I would like to publicly say "THANK YOU" to the late Joseph G. Salerno and family, Sam and Jr. Palumbo who all believed in me and gave me the encouragement to pursue my career, build this funeral home against all the odds I was up against and become the man I am today.

With their guidance and mentoring of all these men have allowed my dreams to become my realities. I will never forget them for what they have taught me, which is "Help your fellow man". For me, that will forever echo into eternity.

The complete décor of Russo' Hillside Chapels funeral home is fashioned in a Greco-Roman, gothic style architecture with towering 12' roman fluted columns and triple Corinthian caps, reminiscent of old-world stature to be admired in our lobby. Venetian arches and rosettes sit high above every door way to truly give an old-world Venetian ambiance. Almost 20,000 sq. ft. of space allows plenty of room for each individual family to celebrate the loss of their loved ones.

This strategic monumental building site, is located at 4500 Roosevelt Road, Hillside, IL 60162, now known as, **Russo's Hillside Chapels** and is literally a few minutes away from the Eisenhower Expressway, I-294 & I-88 tollways, it's walking distance from Mount Carmel, Queen of Heaven and Oakridge/Glen Oaks cemeteries and is surrounded by, monument companies, floral shops, restaurants, gas stations, hotels, etc.

My motto is **"Old World Values with Modern Day Services"**. Having said that, Russo's Hillside Chapels has now become a local hub for all funeral and cremation services regardless of a family's financial stature or secular beliefs. I believe that once a family has chosen us to celebrate the life of a loved one in death, they will find all the closure, compassion and old-world values they are looking for. My ultimate goal is to know that every family we serve has received a personalized and customized funeral service and feel as though they were treated as an extension of my very own family.

I would invite you to visit us at russohillsidechapels.com and take our virtual tour or visit us on Facebook at Russo Hillside Chapels and follow our progress.

During the tenure of my career, I have always strived to be a driving force in the Italian-American Community and spark energy into those around me to do the same. I have served consecutive terms as the President of the Italian-American Civic Organization of Berwyn, President of the Calabresi in America Organization and Chairman for the CIAO St. Joseph Table for over 20 years, current Board of Director and past Treasurer of Casa Italia, Currently the President of Societa' San Francesco di Paola, Currently Board of Director for the Westchester Chamber of Commerce, Currently member of the Hillside-Berkley Chamber of Commerce, Currently a Member of the Illinois Funeral Director association and on the board of the IFDA Legislative Committee, and currently a member of the National Funeral Directors Association. **Now Honored to be the recipient of the 2023 Casa Italia Humanitarian Award!**

I could not have done all this without the support and love of my family and friends.

A very special thank you to Casa Italia Chairman Ron Onesti, Casa Italia Man of the Year Chairman Vito D'Ambrosio along with his committee for this amazing Honor and for allowing me to share my story, passions and dreams with you tonight. Remember... **"THE ABSENCE OF MOVEMENT IS THE BEGINNING OF DEFEAT", NICCOLO' MACHIAVELLI.**

Thank you to all for your continued support to the Casa Italia.

Very sincerely yours,

Joseph A. Russo