



Raffaella Spilotro is a proud Italian American, born in Chicago, but raised in Capurso, Bari for the first 10 years of her life. Upon returning to the USA she continued her education through high school and went on to receive her BA from Depaul University in English Literature and Italian from the School of Education (2004); she also received her MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia University (2010). She was the Italian teacher at Oak Park and River Forest High School for 15 years, where she led students on a bi-annual exchange with a High School in Florence. Throughout her teaching career, she was always searching for innovative materials to make classroom learning authentic, interactive, and fun, thus, in 2012 she embarked on a year-long journey to live in Florence and collaborate with the Istituto Alessandro Volta to create Italian-language vocabulary-building videos. Her videos are used worldwide for the teaching and learning of Italian. Raffaella presented her project at the Italian Language Symposium at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. In 2015, she was the recipient of the National Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Italian from the Honorable Coccia-Inserra Foundation at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

Raffaella has been involved with the Italian-American community in Chicago since the early 2000s when she joined FIERI. In 2008, she was chosen by the Consul General to represent young Italians in Chicago at the Conferenza dei Giovani Italiani nel Mondo in Rome. As a teacher, she was an active member of AATI, presenting in various symposiums and webinars. In 2011, she earned a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities to take part in a month-long course titled “The Art of Teaching Italian Through Italian Art.” She is a former member of Osservatorio della Lingua Italiana through the Italian Consulate of Chicago, has worked closely with the Italian-Chamber of Commerce, and was a board member of Italidea Midwest for 5 years. Raffaella has dedicated a great portion of her life to sharing her passion for the Italian language and culture through teaching, and is excited to continue her journey as the new director of Casa Italia’s Summer Camp.