

The Roseto Chapter of UNICO supports seven local charities: Slater Family Network, Families First, Salvation Army Food Bank, St. Joseph's Ministry Food Bank, Bangor Bloom, Safe Harbor and Easton's Children's Home. Yearly scholarships are awarded to Immaculate Conception School and qualifying seniors from Bangor, Faith Christian, and Pen Argyl schools.

UNICO was founded on October 10, 1922, in Waterbury, Connecticut. A group of fifteen men, led by Dr. Anthony P. Vastola, came together to create what has become an incredibly special and proud organization. It was Dr. Vastola's dream to create an Italian American service organization to engage in charitable works, support higher education, and perform patriotic deeds.

In World War I, the Italian American community represented only four percent of the entire United States population. Although 12 percent of all Americans casualties during this conflict were Italian American, the loyalty of Italian Americans was questioned. The Sacco-Venzetti trial was fueled by prevailing sentiment that Italian Americans remained loyal to their former homeland. Our founders wanted to ensure that everyone understood that Italian Americans loved their adopted country and held no allegiance to their native land save traditions and culture.

The name UNICO was selected as best representing the nature and the character of this fledgling organization. The name is the Italian word for unique, one of a kind. The founders believed that UNICO would be the only one of its kind because it placed service to the community before and above fraternity. At the same time, they hoped that the rest of society would come to know and understand the real contributions of Italian Americans to our way of life. Its sole purpose was to unite all Italian Americans and motivate them to become more civic minded. In order to accomplish this, members would have to understand that they would have to make sacrifices, not for personal gain, but for service to others. In the ensuing years UNICO became an acronym that stood for Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Charity, and Opportunity.

UNICO and the National Civic League Merge

Immediately following World War II, interest was created in merging two disparate groups who held a common idea and common vision: the creation of a truly National Italian American organization with chapters from Massachusetts to Oregon. This second group was known as the National Civic League, with a strong presence in the Midwest.

Antonio R. Rizzuto was the founder and driving force behind the creation of the National Civic League. He was a successful contractor, influential business and civic leader who resided in Omaha, Nebraska. His business took him to many other cities in the great heartland of America.

On May 27, 1931, Rizzuto called a meeting of prominent Americans of Italian heritage in his native city of Omaha. The purpose of this gathering was to discuss the need to organize Italian Americans into a national body or group.

The underlying theme or purpose for this group would be to promote service to the community or civic work as it was called. The goal was to make all its members better American citizens.

A Promise that Continues to be Delivered

Since the inception of UNICO National in 1947, thousands of people and individual charities have been the recipients of UNICO's charity. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised for national and international disasters. Typical of this generosity was the gift of \$500,000 to create ten buildings in Italy to house those suffering from the ravages of an earthquake disaster. UNICO's latest disaster relief effort was raising \$30,000 for victims of the September 11th Twin Towers attack. One of the



UNICO National

Ladies and Gentlemen:
Are you of Italian descent?
Are you married to someone of Italian descent?
Looking to rediscover your history?
Looking to help your community?
JOIN the Organization of Choice!

The Largest Italian American Service Organization in the United States.

Join our Nationwide ranks supporting charitable efforts like: Mental Health, Cooley's Anemia, Scholarships, Cancer Research, Local Community Needs
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Visit our website at: www.unico.org
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recipients was Windows of Hope which provided relief to those who worked in the restaurants and food services located in the World Trade Center.

Each year, UNICO Foundation and UNICO National Chapters donate approximately \$1 million to various charities. Scholarships continue to be the primary focus, as roughly one-third of all monies raised goes to deserving students from chapter locations throughout the chain.

UNICO National has funded major research in Cooley's Anemia and Mental Health. Through its association with the Jimmy Valvano Foundation, it has funded several \$50,000 grants to help find a cure for Cancer. These worthy areas continue to receive generous support from the chapters and its members for these worthy causes.

UNICO National has taken a lead position in combating the negative stereotype of Italian Americans, in the electronic and the print media. The Anti-Bias committee is recognized as one of the leaders in this important bat-

tle. Through its efforts UNICO has become recognized as a true leader in this important battle.

It is in higher education that UNICO National has established itself as a true leader of the Italian American community. In 1986 the UNICO Districts and Chapters were asked to support the creation of the first Endowed Chair in Modern Italian History, in the United States, at the University of Connecticut. After an arduous campaign this small group was responsible for raising over \$250,000 toward the \$1 million objective. The campaign was completed in 1992 and Professor John Davis was appointed to be the first Noether Chair in Modern Italian History.

On March 10, 1993, the Chancellor of Seton Hall, Father Edward Peterson, asked UNICO National to partner with the University to create a Chair in Italian Studies. This \$1 million campaign was completed five years later, and Professor William Connell became the first La Motta Chair in Italian Studies. As a result, in the enthusiastic response by the New Jersey membership and community, a separate endowment was created to provide an Italian Library Collection. The Valente Collection represents one of the richest of its kind in the United States and supports the activities of the La Motta Chair.

At the 1994 National Convention, a third \$1 million Chair campaign was launched. This one represented a partnership with California State University - Long Beach. In 1999, Professor Carlos Chiarenza was appointed as the first Graziadio Chair in Italian Studies.

Concurrent with the Graziadio Chair campaign was yet another unique endeavor. It was a creation of a committee to raise \$300,000 to fully endow a Fellowship in Italian American History. The first DeDominicis Fellowship was conferred on Annette Pontilo in 1998 who is currently conducting research on her doctoral thesis.

The trend continued in 1998 when a group led by the Brookhaven, New York Chapter started the campaign to create a Chair in Italian Studies at SUNY - Stony Brook. This \$1.5 million campaign is in its final stages.

Formally launched in January 2001, the campaign for an Endowed Chair at Montclair State University in New Jersey resulted in the creation of the Theresa and Lawrence R. Inserra Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies. Held by Prof. Teresa Fiore since its inception in 2011, the Chair is devoted to the promotion of Italian and Italian American culture through educational and academic activities that serve the campus as well as the NJ and NYC communities. For information, see www.montclair.edu/inserra

All of these charitable efforts have more than met the objectives of our founder Dr. Vastola and the vision of Antonio Rizzuto. UNICO continues to provide the scholarships and the scholars to elevate the awareness of the real Italian and Italian American contribution to our way of life. It also continues to lead in the battle against discrimination.