

## THE BOROUGH

## BLOOMFIELD

# Wagner's DaVinci Society honors 9

*Annual scholarship dinner celebrates Italian Heritage Month*

**By Carol Ann Benanti**

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Wagner College's DaVinci Society kicked off its observance of Italian Heritage Month by hosting its 12th annual scholarship dinner Thursday in Nicotra's Ballroom at the Hilton Garden Inn, Bloomfield.

Dr. Richard Guarasci, president of Wagner College, former Borough President Ralph J. Lamberti, and Eleanor Conforti, former chairwoman of Community School Board 31 and a Staten Island Advance Woman of Achievement, co-chaired the event, which is a major fundraiser for the scholarships presented to Staten Island Italian-American students attending Wagner College, Grymes Hill.

Conforti addressed the crowd: "Each year the DaVinci Society Dinner is a celebration of Italian history month. If not for the generosity of Ralph Lamberti and Dr. Richard Guarasci, who's beginning his 14th year at the college, the event wouldn't be possible."

To date, the DaVinci Society has awarded 1.2 million dollars to students at Wagner College.

Dr. Guarasci stated: "What a testament to our heritage and without the support of all of you present tonight, we couldn't accomplish our scholarship program at Wagner College ... which will be cele-



**Honorees at the 12th annual DaVinci Society Scholarship Dinner at the Hilton Garden Inn, Bloomfield, are, from left, Mark Zawisny, Dr. Vincent Bellafore, Chief John Dunne, Joseph Ponzi, Donna Proske, Dr. John Piazza, Inez Palladino, Dr. Joseph Suarez and Dr. Daniel Messina.**

(STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/CAROL ANN BENANTI)

brating its 100 year in 2018."

## Community service

Honored for their service to community were: Dr. Daniel J. Messina, president and CEO of Richmond University Medical Center, West Brighton; Inez Palladino, Millennium 2000 Chair, past state president, New York State Federation of Republican Women; Dr. John Piazza, a doctor of chiropractic, New York Chiropractic & Physical Therapy and The Sports Science lab; Joseph Ponzi, an attorney, retired chief investigator, Brooklyn district attorney's office; and Dr. Joseph Suarez.

Renaissance Award recipients were John Dunne, battalion chief, Battalion,

2; Donna Proske, executive director, Staten Island University Hospital; and attorney Mark Zawisny. The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Dr. Vincent Bellafore.

The DaVinci Society, launched by Wagner College, was established to promote greater understanding of Italy, Italian culture, and the contributions of Italian Americans.

It awards scholarships to Italian-American students at the Grymes Hill campus who are worthy and in financial need.

The DaVinci Society of Wagner College was established to promote greater understanding of Italy and the contributions of Italian Americans.

In partnership with the Columbus Citizens Foundation, the society awards a four-year Wagner College scholarship to a Staten Island student of Italian heritage who has demonstrated academic excellence and financial need.

It also donated funds toward the placement of a full-time Italian-language professor at Wagner College.

Former Borough President Ralph J. Lamberti, who was awarded an honorary doctorate from the college, thanked those present before stating, "Without you, who make up the DaVinci Society, we could not award scholarships. Your support throughout the years has been invaluable."