

Leonardo 500 Gala. April 5th , 2019

- Dear Honorary Chairs: **Consul General Lorenzo Ortona and Sheila Pierce Ortona**
- Dear Chair, **Elvia Faggin** tonight here with **Federico**, our Bay area glory, 2009 Obama National Medal of Technology and Innovation,
- dear San Francisco Supervisor, **Catherine Stéfani**,
- dear members of The Leonardo da Vinci Society, distinguished guests representing ISSNAF, BAC : Board members **Enrica d'Ettorre Zappacosta and Elena Orlando**, dear Cenacolo friends **David Cobb**, and **Don Lewis** and many other organizations and individual who could not be here but sent donations and congratulations,

Tonight we are celebrating ourselves and our 70years of existence and, at the same time we are celebrating the 500 years since Leonardo da Vinci from whom our Society took proudly its name, died in Amboise, France.

Many cultural events have been organized for the **Leonardo 500 Celebrations** in collaboration with local and Italian institutions and many more are scheduled thanks also to the new energies of the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, Annamaria Di Giorgio, the co-chair of tonight gala ,who unfortunately at the last minute could not join us , due to a work related trip to Italy.

I had the honor to lead this Society for 5 years full of exciting moments and some worrisome situations but always with pride and pleasure and with the full collaboration of the Board of Directors past and present. My special thanks goes to Vice President and gala committee leader for the past 4 galas **Vincent Fausone**, my partner all these years and to **Alessandro Baccari** who always supported me and protected me and tonight honored us with his presence.

This is my last year and I am ready to step out but I will always be close to the Leonardo da Vinci Society's life and attend the cultural activities. Its' a part of my life and I will not be able to forget.

The show will go on... The nominating committee is working hard to select new Board members for 2019-2020 and last March 14, our Board approved the nomination for President of our Director **Carla Priola Anisman**, seating in our Board for the last three years. The new Board in June will make the official election and will go on to a new and brighter year.

&& I wish to recognize among you some of the men and women that had the same honor to serve as Presidents and some more than once.

1. **Laura Waste**, President from 2000-03 and our Society Historian will soon tell you more about our history. Thank you Laura, stand up please;
2. **Alfred Cavagnaro** President from 1975 to 78 and from 1995 to 1998 is here, stand up Alfred!
3. **Arnold Dito**, president from 2003 to 2005 is among us, Stand up, please;
4. And **Melvin Britton** the president that chose me and gave me the honor to follow his footsteps.

I would like also to have a minute of silence in memory and honor of an other President and friend that we lost recently:

Mary Rodgers, president from 1998 to 2000 and in our Board of Directors for many years, 1 minute of silence.

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In honor of this double celebrations Our Society have decided last year to select with the help of ISSNAF- BAC, three young brilliant minds living in the Bay area and award them:

Gaia Andreoletti for Biological Sciences

Simone d'Amico for Engineering

Vanessa Polito Mathematics and Physics

I congratulate them. The Award Ceremony will be following soon.

To finish I would like to express my gratitude to the gala Committee members that made all this possible and especially to **Mauro Aprile Zanetti** our Master of ceremony tonight and program & marketing director, to **Laura Waste** who brought us all the Society memorabilia and worked with curator **Valentine Anania** at the exhibition, and in a personal and special way to **Sabrina Longega Wilson** who worked many hours at invitations, decorations, awards and more and in these 5 years has been a constant and warm presence and support for me and the other Board Directors.

And as my daughter Barbara, advised me to do, I want to leave you with a quote by Leonardo himself . In these years, "I have tried to " smile in trouble, gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection...." I hope that I served you well.

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