JFRC receives $1 million gift

At a JFRC Chicago Alumni Aperitivo reception on October 18, Emilio Iodice, director and vice president of the John Felice Rome Center, announced the largest current commitment in JFRC history: one million dollars from Anthony F. Piazza II (JFRC ’62–’63). This gift will support capital improvements on campus as part of the Insieme comprehensive campaign for the Rome Center, including updating and renovating of common spaces, academic spaces, offices, and student residences.

In recognition of this gift, Loyola University Chicago will name the Information Commons in Rome. Beginning spring 2014, it will be known as the Anthony and Susan Brazier Piazza Information Commons, paying tribute to Tony Piazza and the late Susan Brazier Piazza (JFRC Spring ’63). Read more about the Piazzas in this month’s feature article on pg. 3.

IN THIS ISSUE

Olive pressing, anyone?
pg. 2

Record gift in memory of JFRC alumna
pg. 3

Rome memories from the class of 1972
pg. 5

Calendar of events
pg. 8
Dear Alumni and Friends,

As we approach Thanksgiving, it is fitting to take a moment to express my deepest thanks to all who have been so committed to the Rome Center through the years. We have scores of alumni who have served our students and our programs in so many different ways.

Our alumni and friends conduct study trips that expose our students to regions and events of Italy that are important to Italian culture and heritage. They facilitate study trips to other countries in Europe where students can explore issues of peace, justice, human rights, and faith. JFRC alumni also are asked to give special presentations in classes in Rome. These opportunities broaden and deepen our students’ classroom experiences.

I am grateful as well to the John Felice Rome Center Alumni Board, now a national board, which works to promote the ongoing connections among alumni, keep alumni close to the center, and serve the center and our students.

Finally, I am very grateful to all who financially support the JFRC and our students. This issue of Il Bollettino highlights a significant gift made by an extraordinary alumnus, Tony Piazza. It also highlights the power of many smaller gifts that, together, make a real impact on the student experience as seen in the students’ thank-you letters to the Forza Roma donors. Without gifts large and small that transform the center and our students’ lives, the JFRC would not be as strong or as competitive in the study abroad market.

May you all enjoy a blessed and happy Thanksgiving Day with those you love.

Warmest and best wishes,

Emilio Iodice
Director, JFRC
Vice President, Loyola
University Chicago

Olive pressing, anyone?

In Italy, fall is the season of the olive harvest. Families all over the country gather to strip the legendary trees of their fruit, which drop delightfully onto nets bunched below. When their trees stand bare, families gather the olives in burlap sacks and plastic crates, toting their harvest to the local frantoio or olive press. While the press hums away inside, outside a fire burns where locals toast bruschetta, sample their fresh oil, and compare the first batches of their homemade wine.

JFRC students participated in the celebratory olive harvest last August. After a day and a half of work, more than 40 olive trees on campus were stripped bare. Student Life Assistant Jack Spittle and eight students then took the resulting 1,200 pounds of olives to a frantoio just north of Rome in the countryside. There they experienced the pressing process firsthand: they watched their olives as they were cleaned, chopped, mixed, and then pressed. Forty-five minutes later, their oil began to ooze out and continued to do so for half an hour, after which 70 liters of the delicious green liquid rested in four massive containers. The quality of a particular olive oil is determined by a variety of factors, but the classifications generally seen on labels are determined by acidity level. The JFRC oil has an acidity level of just 0.35 percent, which makes it high-quality extra virgin oil. Buon lavoro!
In early 1962, Tony Piazza (JFRC ’62–’63) was nearing the end of his sophomore year as a history major at Santa Clara University when he saw a notice on a bulletin board that Loyola University Chicago was starting up a study abroad program in Rome. The idea was to spend one’s junior year in Italy, something that appealed to him.

Upon being accepted to what would be the first full-year term at the Rome Center following the first class of spring 1962, he set sail on the New Amsterdam from New Jersey in late summer and reached Southampton, England, before trekking through Paris and Luzern en route to Rome.

“As it turns out, in the year that I was in Rome, I met a woman who became my wife,” says Piazza. “She came to the Rome Center in the spring of 1963 from St. Louis. We corresponded for several years after we met and were married in 1966.”

Piazza and his wife, Susan Brazier Piazza (JFRC Spring ’63), were married for over 40 years when she was diagnosed with a terminal disease. Upon learning this, they had a conversation about wanting to do something significant to support the Rome Center—a place that held great affinity for both of them and brought them together.

“We had a very long and happy marriage,” says Piazza. “And that’s probably the best gift that Loyola ever gave us.”

Together, they made a contribution to establish a scholarship program for students who couldn’t afford to attend the Rome Center. When Susan passed away in 2011, Piazza began planning a substantial gift to the Rome Center in her memory and a tribute to their 45 years of marriage—the first million-dollar current commitment in the history of the Rome Center.

“With the decision to purchase the current campus and the vision that Emilio Iodice and Father Garanzini have shared with us about what they would like to see the Rome Center become, I felt this was the right time to make a commitment,” says Piazza. “I hope other alumni who enjoyed the JFRC will see it similarly and join those who have given already to help fund this very important program.”

During his student days at the Rome Center, Piazza experienced several historic events. “Within a few days of us arriving in Rome, we were able to go down to St. Peter’s Basilica and witness the opening of Vatican II,” says Piazza. “That was spectacular.”

John Felice also organized a private audience for the students with Pope John XXIII about a month before he passed away. And Piazza was still in Rome when Paul was elected Pope.

“John Felice opened up doors for the program in Rome that only he could have opened,” says Piazza. “He had no fear whatsoever of asking for things that seemed unattainable and would find some way to get them. He set up an audience for us with the president of Italy. Things like that—things that you wouldn’t think someone in his position could pull off—he did.”

Piazza, who lives in St. Louis, recently retired after running a business he started in 1967—a kitchen and bath business where he worked his whole career. RSI Kitchen and Bath (RSIKB.com) is a family business now run by his daughter, Megan, though he remains involved in an advisory role. The company designs residential kitchens and bathrooms for builders, remodelers, and retail customers. Piazza ran the business for 45 years until 2012.

“My year at the Rome Center gave me the opportunity to look at the world from a totally different perspective. Many Americans don’t engage cultures beyond their own or think outside the borders of the United States,” says Piazza. “Being in Rome opened me up to a whole different world out there with different people and different ideas, and it’s very important to understand how other people think. If you want to convince somebody of something, you have to understand an issue from their perspective. My year in Rome started that learning path.”

“I think studying abroad is even more relevant today than it was back then,” he continues, “because when I was a young man you could be focused on just the US and still do well. I think today as the world shrinks from an information standpoint that having a worldly attitude is even more critical.”

Susan Brazier Piazza (JFRC Spring ’63) and Tony Piazza (JFRC ’62–63)
Dear Forza Roma Donors,

I cannot adequately express my gratitude for your generosity, which allowed me to travel to Bosnia and Serbia. I experienced a world completely foreign to me and had one of the most transformative weeks of my life.

My trip began in Belgrade with visits to significant sites in the long history of Serbia, and I experienced the local culture as well. Then we traveled to the mountains of Sarajevo, Bosnia, where Serbian forces once laid siege on the city. I saw the tunnel that Bosnians had used to smuggle supplies into Sarajevo to keep the city running during the siege.

The conflict in the Balkans and the history there is so recent. There are “Sarajevo roses” in the street—remains of mortar blasts filled with red resin as memorials to those who died. I saw people my age without limbs who had lost them as children during the conflict.

In both countries, everyone had their own experience of war and way of moving forward, not only with their own lives but as a nation. No one wants their children dying for a war.

I learned much about myself and my place in this world. I gained a new understanding of how different people live and how they are shaped through their experiences. I will carry this trip with me for the rest of my life.

Greer Johnston (JFRC ’12–’13)

Dear Forza Roma Donors,

Thank you for your generous support that allowed me to go to Morocco on spring break. I am a strong proponent of justice and equality, particularly women’s rights, and I am especially interested in women in the Islamic and Arabic world. Thanks to this trip, I was able to see Islamic culture firsthand.

I flew into Casablanca Saturday morning and saw the Mosque of Hassan II. The next day, we headed up to a predominantly Berber region where we explored a village. We saw where the villagers worked, toured the home of the town’s miller, and climbed a waterfall in the Ourika Valley.

My favorite city was Fes, Morocco’s second largest city (next to Casablanca) and its religious capital. There I felt like I was seeing the real Morocco and not just touristy sights like in Marrakech. In Fes, many businesses are shared by groups of families who then pass the business down through the generations. Their living spaces are communal. Neighbors share an oven, gardens are built inside a group of four or five houses, and everyone congregates at the mosque at least once a week for both prayer and socializing.

I feel so lucky to have visited Morocco. It is an experience I will always remember.

Alexandra Weber (JFRC Spring ’13)
Turn back the clock

Rome memories from the class of 1972

By John Hunter
(JFRC ’72–’73)

In 1972, one could have studied abroad in London or Paris or Geneva, but by going to Rome one experienced life in a way that other European cities would not have allowed.

Entering the Rome Center for the first time—the beautiful palm trees that ushered us in, us unaware of the lifetime friends we’d make and the love of Rome we’d come to share. We had no idea our teachers were world renowned and the maids would become our friends. Volleyball, classes in pajamas, needing a reservation just to call home, and of course pasta, pasta, pasta.

Rome: where crowded green buses led us down the Trionfale to the center of a world that would change our lives with its artistry, history, and magic. Rome: where an endless array of public strikes made receiving a single letter from home a very special moment. Rome: where it seemed forever for a sugar cube to sink through the foam of a cappuccino, and where “forever” passed in the blink of an eye.

We remember the “campfire girls,” Christmas in Piazza Navona, St. Peter’s, Giolitti’s gelato, nights at the Trevi Fountain and Max’s Bar, and seeing how many people you can get in a Fiat Cinquecento.

We remember the school trip to Russia, class trips to the Forum, incredible weekend trips that started on Thursday, and traveling to the ends of Europe and beyond.

Never to be forgotten was the audience with President Leone, learning Italian (some more so than others), the student guitarists during a love-filled Mass, and of course the final night out on our balconies not wanting it to end.

I leave you with some reflections from our yearbook 40 years ago:

*We have seen flashes of faces*
*Reappearing to remind of the past*
*Stop now—reflect the changes and the loves*
*Vision from afar yourself*
*Knowing those who have turned your heart and your life,*
*Someone long ago called them friends.*

New JFRC alumni chapter announced!

The John Felice Rome Center is pleased to announce the JFRC Los Angeles Alumni Chapter!

Alumni residing in Southern California now have a local extension of the central JFRC Alumni Relations office, to support future opportunities for reconnecting, networking, as well as welcoming new alumni to the area. The JFRC Alumni Relations office is thrilled with this addition to its alumni chapters in DC and Cleveland, not only due to the distance but, more importantly, to support the evident desire of alumni to meet and reconnect in LA.

The JFRC Los Angeles chapter is led by three chapter ambassadors: Megan Heilbing (JFRC Fall ’03, BA ’05), Nicole Stygar (JFRC Spring ’03, BA ’05), and Vanessa Crase (JFRC Fall ’04, BA ’05), who have been instrumental in establishing the chapter. They plan to organize alumni gatherings twice a year. The LA chapter also has its own Facebook group, supported by the JFRC Alumni Relations office, to ensure complete outreach to West Coast alumni. On Facebook, search for “John Felice Rome Center Los Angeles alumni.”

Whether you live on the West Coast now or plan to move there, be on the lookout for future events and reach out to our LA chapter ambassadors by visiting luc.edu/jfrcalumni!

### June 12
**CHICAGO ALUMNI ART IN ROME**
A class so many alumni enjoyed at the John Felice Rome Center was transported to Chicago, hosted by none other than Professor John Nicholson at Loyola’s Lake Shore Campus. The event included a special lecture given by Nicholson of Bernini’s sculpture in Galleria Borghese, followed by a reception for alumni to meet and reconnect.

### July 11
**CLEVELAND ALUMNI APERITIVO**
Supported by the Cleveland Alumni Chapter, alumni met at the Westwood Country Club for an annual gathering to meet and reconnect. This year’s event was made possible by the generous underwriting of Terry Brizz (JFRC Spring ’76), where all guest event fees were a direct gift to the JFRC Insieme campaign.

### August 16
**ST. LOUIS ALUMNI APERITIVO**
Organized by JFRC alumnus Joe Kurowski (JFRC ’06–’07, BA ’09, MBA ’12), alumni in St. Louis gathered at Milo’s Bocce Garden to catch up with friends and fellow classmates. Alumni from various class years enjoyed an evening of stories, networking, and of course a few rounds of bocce!
Honor Roll 2013

We extend our gratitude to all John Felice Rome Center supporters. Gifts reflected below were given between July 1, 2012, and June 30, 2013.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRS

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Karen, my wife, and I are quite honored to be asked to chair the Società di Donatori. I spent my sophomore year at what was then called the Rome Center of Liberal Arts, on Via della Camilluccia, in 1966–67. I was very fortunate to be able to remain on campus for the summer following the academic year to work for John Felice. After twelve months, my life was completely transformed, and nothing has been the same since!

This is a very crucial time for the JFRC and the Insieme campaign. Although a great deal has already been accomplished, much important work remains to be done. Please join with Karen and me in supporting the campaign in the spirit of St. Ignatius, who advised us always to be “men (and, of course, women) for others.”

Together, we can assure the future of our beloved JFRC and change the lives of future students as ours were changed.

With very best regards,

Jim Centner (JFRC ‘66–’67)

Società di Donatori

The Società di Donatori consists of donors who make personal, annual gifts of $1,000 or more to the John Felice Rome Center to fund the center’s key priorities.

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Chris and Stephen Wilsey (JFRC ‘65–’66)
Kristen Witkowski (JFRC Fall ‘01, BS ‘03)
Yvonne Zecca (JFRC ‘70–’71)

* Deceased
Calendar of events
Visit LUC.edu/jfrcalumni/events for additional events as they are added.

CHICAGO ALUMNI “GIVE BACK”
1–6 p.m. • Dec. 14, 2013 • The Merchandise Mart
Give back this holiday season alongside fellow JFRC alumni in Chicago! Donate just three hours of your time for wrapping and organizing gifts to be delivered by the Catholic Charities of Chicago. A holiday happy hour will follow at Bull & Bear from 4–6 p.m., cash bar.
RSVP: LUC.edu/jfrcalumni/chicagogives

LOS ANGELES ALUMNI ART OUTING
11 a.m.–1:30 p.m. • Jan. 19, 2014 • The J. Paul Getty Museum
Join the newest JFRC Alumni Chapter for an afternoon at the Getty to meet and reconnect with fellow alumni. The event will include an exclusive tour of the “Treasures from Church and Cloister” premier exhibit, followed by lunch.
Cost: $20 per person • RSVP: LUC.edu/jfrcalumni/la

WASHINGTON, DC, ALUMNI WINE TASTING
5–7 p.m. • March 8, 2014 • Capital Wine School
The JFRC DC Alumni Chapter is pleased to host an exclusive Italian wine tasting event at a renowned venue. Join us for this opportunity to learn and sample various wines from Tuscany, Italy’s best-known wine region, while meeting fellow alumni in the DC area.
Cost: $50 per person • RSVP: LUC.edu/jfrcalumni/DC

ST. LOUIS ALUMNI “GIVE BACK”
5–7 p.m. • Feb. 7, 2014 • Location TBA
Join fellow alumni to give back to the community through Feeding America. Guests are encouraged to bring three or more canned goods and enjoy a special happy hour while reconnecting with friends and classmates.
Cost: $20 per person • RSVP: LUC.edu/jfrcalumni/stlouis

CAREER MENTOR PROGRAM
The JFRC alumni mentoring program is off to a great start! Look forward to a full update in the next issue, including personal testimonies. If you would like to be a mentor, please contact Casey Allison at calliso@LUC.edu.