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Triton College

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Triton College Celebrated Italian American Heritage Month with a Panel and Discussion
Event was Featured on ABC7 Chicago as a News Highlight



The panel included (from left to right) Maryann Pisano, Katie Rullo, Peter Volpe, Moderator Frank Di Piero, Tony Renelli, Colleen Rockafellow and Louis H. Rago.

RIVER GROVE, Ill. – The Triton College community enjoyed a taste of Italian-American culture and cuisine on Tuesday, Oct. 24. The college held their first ever Italian American Heritage Month Panel and Discussion, featuring Triton faculty, staff and alumni. The panel was featured on ABC7 Chicago as a news highlight.

Moderator Frank Di Piero, host of the podcast *Keepin' It Real with Frankie D*, asked a series of questions that pertained to each panelist and their Italian-American heritage.

“Italians have been very influential to the world,” noted Louis H. Rago, a Triton College Foundation board member and president of the Original Rago Brothers Funeral Homes. “We have Amerigo Vespucci to Antonio Meucci to John Cabot, who have made brilliant contributions to our everyday lives.”

Maryann Pisano, staff writer at Triton College, shared with the audience the premise of her children's book, *Caterina's Journey*, and her other writing endeavors.

Peter Volpe, market president of Wintrust Bank Chicago, and Tony Renelli, Triton College Operations and Maintenance discussed fond memories of growing up in Italian-American neighborhoods and their childhoods.

"I loved my grandmother's cooking," Volpe recalls.

"There were a lot of famous people that lived in my all-Italian neighborhood," added Renelli. "This included Kim Novak and Hugh Hefner."

Katie Rullo, associate dean of Continuing Education at Triton, impressed the audience with stories from her honeymoon to Italy, which lasted 12 days.

"My husband is 100 percent Italian, and he has blonde hair and blue eyes," she joked. "I love traveling to Italy and relishing in the beauty, art, food and music."

Colleen Rockafellow, associate vice president of Business Operations at Triton College, talked about her brother Joe Mazzuca's career as a professional baseball player. Joe Mazzuca played for the Florida Marlins, and then eventually began playing for the Italian national baseball team.

"My brother lived in Italy for 10 years and was able to play baseball and travel all over the world," she explained. "He even has dual citizenship."

Each panelist was asked by Di Piero where their family hails from in Italy and if they have ever traveled back to their motherland.

"Every Italian-American should at least visit Rome once in their life," Di Piero explained. "There is so much culture and history. It's truly an incredible country."

Those in attendance were able to live *la dolce vita* with gelato, pizzelles (traditional Italian waffle cookies), Italian candy and pastries after the event.

The panel was co-sponsored by Triton College's Heritage Committee and the Professional Development Center.

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ABOUT TRITON COLLEGE

Triton College is a two-year college dedicated to helping members of the 25 Western Cook County communities in our district and beyond to achieve educational, professional and personal success. Located in River Grove, Ill., Triton offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs on its 110-acre campus, featuring a comfortable, friendly and diverse atmosphere. Triton also holds classes at satellite locations and offers online learning opportunities. Triton's dedicated faculty and staff work to provide high quality, convenient and affordable educational opportunities to more than 14,000 students each year. Triton College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Learn more at <http://www.triton.edu/>.