

## 3rd Annual Bocce Invitational

SOMERSET, NJ - Hundreds of amateur and professional bocce players are expected to compete in the 2nd Annual Bocce Invitational Tournament at Colonial Park, Mettlers Road, in Somerset, NJ, on Saturday, June 20 from 8 am to 6 pm.

The New Jersey Bocce Invitational is an Italian American cultural event designed to allow people of all backgrounds to compete for the benefit of local New Jersey charities. Beneficiaries of the event are Operation Shoebox New Jersey, an organization that collects items and ships care packages to combat troops overseas and the Boys and Girls Clubs of New Jersey. Participating sponsors include The Italian Tribute, Order Sons of Italy NJ Foundation & CSJ, The Italian American Police Society of New Jersey and VP Builders.

The daylong schedule will feature Bocce matches in both amateur and professional categories. The tournament will be officiated by America's Mr. Bocce, Phil Ferrari and his assistant, Ciro Poppiti.

Will Jimeno, retired Port Authority Police Officer of NY/NJ and inspirational speaker will assist in the festivities and throw out the ceremonial



FRANK VALANZOLA

first ball on behalf of Operation Shoebox New Jersey. Will is one of only two people to survive under the rubble on 9/11 and his story was told in the Oliver Stone motion picture World Trade Center.

Giada Valenti, singer and songwriter will perform selections from her recent CD *And I Love you So*. Giada is from Venice, Italy and has performed throughout the United States and most recently at Feinstein's Cabaret at the Regency Hotel in New York City.

Comedian and Saturday Night Live alum Joe Piscopo, vocalist Bobby Valli and Rutgers University football players are expected as repeat guests.

Vicki Wallace will perform the song "Fallen But Not Forgotten" as a Law Enforcement Tribute in memory of P.O. Kenneth Santucci and a soldier tribute "When Will I See You." The Italian Chicks, formerly hosts at the Hoboken Italian Festival, along with Danny Aiello will perform for the guests with their unique style of comedy and song.

Funds raised from entry fees and sponsorships will be donated to each of the non-profit organizations, according to Frank Valanzola, founder and director of the Bocce Invitational. "The continued success of these organizations is important because their efforts make a difference in the lives of many New Jersey residents and their families," Valanzola explained. "Moreover, the time and talent of our entertainers, volunteers and participants will help make this event memorable for our soldiers overseas and children at home." Additionally, through the hard work of the Bocce Committee, Somerset County Sheriff Frank Provenzano, CWO-USMC(ret) Patrick DeChirico and Sgt. Mark Szczecina, Somerset County Sheriff's Office has ensured participation from our law enforcement and soldiers.

Operation Shoebox New Jersey will host a packing event in conjunction with the tournament, providing an opportunity for all guests to pack a box of personal care items that will be sent overseas to U.S. troops - many of them soldiers, Marines and sailors from New Jersey - who are now deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and other Mideast locations.

The Somerset County Park Commission is providing additional sponsorship.

Visit [www.newjerseybocceinvitational.com](http://www.newjerseybocceinvitational.com) to register a team or to find out about sponsorship opportunities.



### Bring Extended Famiglia Back into the Fold

A few years back in a Roman breakfast bar, I was distracted from my warm brioche and frothy cappuccino long enough to be amused by a suave 19-year old in designer shades and a tight fitting muscle shirt. His eyes became momentarily glazed with romance as a bella signorina of about the same age sauntered by. To my amazement, his elderly grandmother, with whom he was sharing breakfast, kept eating and talking to him as if nothing unusual was taking place. After all, this was Italy, no? Such intergenerational rapport, which seems like a rarity in the US, is instead a natural and exalted part of daily life in the Bel Paese. Go to breakfast with Nonna? Perche no? Flirt right in front of her when you see a pretty girl? Ma che c'e di male? After all, she is famiglia, vero? Italian journalist Luigi Barzini once described his country as a mosaic of families. Indeed, famiglia is considered a part of oneself, just like a leg, or an arm or ... a grandmother.

No matter how many ties removed, we learn the fundamental truths of life through the dynamics of both nuclear and extended family. Relationships with our relatives teach us early on where our shortcomings are, as well as where our strengths lie. Among famiglia we learn how to argue fairly, how to make peace, how to avoid getting our buttons pressed, or even how to draw the line with relationships that drive us nuts. Yes, we even learn to draw personal boundaries through years of trial-and-error experimentation on the familial drawing board.

Relationships with relatives are well worth getting skilled in. They add richness and dimension to our lives; like catching a glimpse of ourselves in a multi-faceted mirror. Too often we give up, hold grudges, or cut off family members when they don't do what we think they should. How many years can you stay mad at Zia Maria for not seating you at the head table at her daughter's wedding? Angry silences between family members are poisonous, not only because they deprive us of the chance to refine our social skills in an emotionally safe setting (after all, relatives are forever), but also because something tragic may happen before you and Zia get a chance to reestablish the peace.

Whether we like them or not, relatives were given to us to teach us about ourselves; to learn tolerance, compassion, understanding, and personal boundaries. We learn nothing from walking away for years in an angry huff.

This week, your assignment is to revive a relationship with a relative you may have drifted from for one reason or another. I know. I am asking you to swallow your pride and take the first step. Make that phone call. Make that peace. Invite your long lost cousin out to lunch and mend the fence. One by one, you can bring your extended famiglia back into the fold and learn the important lessons that will help you become a better you.

Dr. Raeleen D'Agostino, author of *Living la Dolce Vita: Bring the Passion, Laughter, and Serenity of Italy into Your Daily Life, can help you live each day with appreciation -Italian style. Write to her at [info@dolcevitaseminars.com](mailto:info@dolcevitaseminars.com) and tell her your troubles.*

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**ANTHONY N.  
IANNARELLI, JR.**  
ATTORNEY AT LAW

New Jersey & New York Bars

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