

The National Italian American Foundation Honorees

MARIA FRANCA FERRERO

NIAF Special Achievement Award in Philanthropy

Mrs. Ferrero was born Maria Franca Fissolo in Savigliano, in the Piedmont Region of Northern Italy. She received her degree in Foreign Languages from the Carlo Bo University in Milan and is fluent in four languages: Italian, English, French and German.

In 1962, Maria Franca married Michele Ferrero, the late Italian entrepreneur and owner of the chocolate manufacturer Ferrero, whose brands today include Nutella, Kinder Chocolate, Ferrero Rocher, and Tic Tacs. Michele and Maria Franca had two children: Pietro, who tragically passed away in 2011 during a humanitarian mission in South Africa; and Giovanni, who is chief executive officer of the Ferrero Group.

Working side by side with her husband, over the decades Mrs. Ferrero has had an active role in the Ferrero Group, significantly contributing to its ongoing success. Mrs. Ferrero constantly managed the institutional relations of the Ferrero Group with all major political, economic and social counterparts. In this role, she had contacts with government leaders at the highest level around the world to promote the Group and its achievements.

Mrs. Ferrero was instrumental in the development of the Group's Human Resources policies. These policies have enabled positive collaborations with labor unions and have led to the creation of a serene and productive work environment, so much so that Ferrero has won for two consecutive years the Randstad Award — a prize representing the “people's choice” and electing the company as the most attractive employer based on work atmosphere, job security, work-life balance and financial reliability.

Mrs. Ferrero's direction contributed to the Group receiving the 2009 Reputation Institute Award, in which Ferrero came out on top in an annual survey of the world's 1,337 most reputable companies in 32 different countries.

One of Mrs. Ferrero's most important accomplishments comes with the success of the Piera, Pietro and Giovanni Ferrero Foundation. She has been its tireless president since its establishment in 1983. By creating this Foundation, Michele and Maria Franca Ferrero desired to express their gratitude to all the employees “who have contributed with conscientious commitment to the Company's growth” by providing them with a community place where new experiences and challenges, even after retirement, are encouraged.

Thanks to Mrs. Ferrero's dedication and active direction, the Ferrero Foundation has grown to promote activities in the areas of art, science, history and literature by organizing conventions, conferences, seminars and exhibitions. It also offers health assistance and social programs to retired Ferrero employees (“Ferrero Seniors”), encouraging a different and positive idea of old age, stimulating people to be creative, to continue learning, to be involved with social life and solidarity projects, and to focus on improving their quality of life.

The Ferrero Foundation is located in Alba, Italy, in a space that can address the needs of approximately 3,500 former employees and their spouses, providing them with a meeting place, workshops, a library, a multi-purpose auditorium, gyms, exhibition halls and spaces for medical and clinical conferences.

The Ferrero Foundation also has programs for intergenerational exchange, taking care of the relationship between grandparents and children; it awards annual national and international scholarships to the children of Ferrero employees and seniors.

To provide additional assistance to working mothers, Mrs. Ferrero created the Ferrero Nursery in 2009—a state-of-the-art nursery intended as “a place for children” to observe and promote their growth, and to enhance the range of experiences and potential of each child. Seniors can take part in learning activities at the nursery, entering a type of “family unit,” sharing experiences and helping children to develop relational autonomy.

Aside from all of her professional activities, Mrs. Ferrero enjoys classical music, art and literature, but most of all spending time with her five beautiful grandchildren.