

A STEADFAST SUPPORTER OF CHARITABLE INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT WORTHY CAUSES
Castagna, president of Castagna Realty, draws on three generations of vision, distinction and quality



Catherine Castagna

NEW YORK, NY The *New York Real Estate Journal (NYREJ)* sat down with Catherine Castagna, this month's Long Island executive of the month, for a question and answer session. Castagna is the president of Castagna Realty.

NYREJ: What is your role in the Castagna organization?

Castagna: For over 50 years, my father, Frank Castagna, steered Castagna Realty's success, and today we continue to lead Long Island's high-level luxury shopping sector. As president, I'm continuing my father's vision of developing and managing properties of distinction, while also positioning the company for the future.

As a member of a family-run business, I work alongside my uncle, Robert Ronzoni, my mother Rita Castagna's brother, who now serves as COO. We work collaboratively with our team to manage the various properties. Americana Manhasset, which is really the crown jewel of the Castagna Realty portfolio, has become an internationally recognized shopping destination and, like any great retail project, is continuously evolving. My work also includes upholding my family's commitment to philanthropy and involvement in the communities we serve. This commitment is part of Castagna's DNA and integral to our identity.

NYREJ: What is it like to work alongside your uncle, Robert Ronzoni, who also grew up in a family run business?

Castagna: My dad has a tremendous entrepreneurial spirit, as did my grandfather Ferdinand before him, who founded the company. My uncle too was an entrepreneur before joining the Castagna organization, and having worked with my dad for 16 years, he understands the culture of our company.



Catherine Castagna, with her parents, Frank and Rita Castagna, and two students from The Viscardi Center

Like me, Robert grew up in a family business, learning from an early age the elements of a successful enterprise. He was named president of Ronzoni Macaroni in 1977 and served in that role through 1985 when his family sold the business to General Foods Corp. He continued to work with the Fortune 500 company as president of the Ronzoni division through 1991. Similar to my uncle, I learned the essential facets of the family business under the guidance of my parents, providing me with a unique foundation from which to work.

Robert also has a strong background in real estate, having worked previously for Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty. In addition to Americana Manhasset, he has helped us manage our other properties on Long Island and Upstate. We both value our partnerships with other developers which have led to quality projects, such as our partnership with Tritec Real Estate, which resulted in the 230,000 s/f Dealertrack headquarters in North Hills.

NYREJ: What does it take to lead Long Island's high-level luxury shopping sector?

Castagna: Drawing on three generations of vision, distinction and quality, Castagna



Americana Manhasset

Realty today has a unique foundation from which to lead the only internationally recognized retail shopping destination on Long Island. With over 60 stores and hundreds of luxury brands to choose from, we provide our customers with a complete experience. This includes an array of services, such as a concierge team and a unique, complimentary personal shopping service. Many of our stores offer personalization gifting services such as custom embroidery, embossing and engraving. Hosting special, exclusive events is very important too. In today's world, the experience and the service must be unparalleled.

Realizing that many shoppers travel to our stores from across the world, we also help provide language assistance. Our Concierge Services offer language assistance in Mandarin, Spanish and Italian and can make arrangements for any other language needs our customers may have. We value the relationship with each and every customer, and it's important that we and our stores convey that through our marketing efforts and the services we offer.

NYREJ: Why is community support so important to the Castagna family?

Castagna: Like my parents, I am a steadfast supporter of charitable initiatives that support worthy causes, including those that focus on cultural initiatives, health concerns, and education. I believe in investing in the community, as do Castagna Realty's employees and tenants.

This year, along with over 70 Americana Manhasset boutiques and Wheatley Plaza stores, Castagna Realty will host its 25th annual Champions for Charity holiday shopping benefit, which last year raised over \$1 million to benefit more than 100 local not-for-profit organizations. Since the program's inception, nearly \$14 million has been raised. I am so proud of Champions for Charity and honored to be able to help carry on my family's legacy of community support, helping to make a difference in the lives of others.

I am also very proud to serve on the board of The Viscardi Center, supporting its efforts to educate, employ and empower children and adults with disabilities. It is an organization that has been near and dear to our hearts for a long time.

NYREJ: What was it like growing up with the Americana Manhasset in your "backyard?"

Castagna: Exactly how you think it would be – fabulous! While growing up, the Americana grew to become the Long Island home to some of the world's most iconic fashion labels, like Louis Vuitton, Hermès, and Dior, so I was exposed to many sophisticated European brands from an early age. I continue to have a love and respect for the artistry, talent and hard work that goes into creating the designs found in the boutiques. This sentiment also applies to the architecture and landscape design that goes hand in hand with a first-class property such as Americana. Years ago, my father brought in Peter Marino as our master architect and Oehme van Sweden as our landscape architect, because he understood that in order to attract the world's most remarkable fashion and jewelry brands, we needed to house them within a creative, modern and beautiful setting.