

# *Conversazione with Bob Ruggieri*

*Excerpt from The Italian Times, June 2010, page 23*

Midshipman **Michael Balistreri** has had some very interesting stuff going on in his life recently, and it's as the result of his having learned and built upon his ability to speak Italian.

Michael, the son of Italian Community Center Board member **Tom Balistreri** and his wife, **Barbara**, received his first instruction in Italian at Rufus King High School, then had the benefit of private tutoring. Upon entering the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD, he was one of the founders of the Italian American Midshipmen Club at the academy. That club now has 80 members and Michael is its president.

The interesting stuff? During their spring break, Michael and three classmates visited L'Accademia Navale (the Italian Naval Academy) in Livorno (a port city in the Tuscany region, between Florence and Pisa) and were given a tour by Italian officers attending a preflight course there. The Americans visited the academy's sea-navigation simulator, academic classrooms and planetarium.

Their Italian guides gave a presentation about the L'Accademia Navale and its history. That served a dual purpose. It educated their American visitors, and also gave the guides a chance to practice their English. That'll benefit them because their preflight training in Livorno will be followed by training at the U.S. Navy flight school in Pensacola, FL.

Michael and his classmates have made it a point to stay in touch with the Italian midshipmen since returning home.

There's more. Michael has been invited to the Italian Embassy in Washington, DC on June 2 for a dinner celebrating Italian Armed Forces Day.

Still more. He's going to have the opportunity to be on a 10-day cruise with the Italian Navy. In August, they're sending the San Giusto, an amphibious transport ship, to travel between Norfolk and Boston.

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Michael's experiences thus far are one indication of how the ability to speak another language – in this case, Italian – can be of great benefit as the world gets smaller. So kudos to WisItalia, whose efforts have led to Italian being taught in more and more Wisconsin schools, and to Milwaukee Public Schools for its establishment of the Italian Immersion Program at Victory School.

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Just a reminder. Those people identified in **bold-faced type** are members of the Italian Community Center.

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*Is there anything interesting, unusual or humorous going on in your world? If so, let's tell others. Drop me a note, and be sure to include your phone number. You can leave that note with Times Editor Tom Hemman at the ICC office or send it to me directly at 9049 N. 86th St., Milwaukee, WI, 53224-1805 or via e-mail at [rjuggieri@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rjuggieri@sbcglobal.net). Grazie!*