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July 11, 2019

INTERVIEW: "The Hamptons Happening" Honoree Antonella Bertello On Giving Back, The Baker House 1650's Unique History, And More



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Antonella Bertello is being honored at the 15th Annual *Hamptons Happening*. (Courtesy Photo)

Antonella Bertello, owner of the boutique Hamptons inn, **The Baker House 1650**, will be honored at the 15th Annual *The Hamptons Happening* in Bridgehampton. Bertello is committed to her local community, serving on the Board of Directors of the East Hampton Chamber of Commerce. This year, Bertello will be one of four honorees at this year's event, including Lidia Bastianich (chef honoree), **Nicole Miller** (fashion honoree), and **Ian Duke** (restaurateur honoree). *The Hamptons Happening*, benefitting **Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation**, will take place on Saturday, July 13.

Apart from owning **The Baker House 1650** and serving on the Board of Directors, Bertello is also a Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker and Member of the Multi-Million Dollar Club at The **Corcoran Group**. She has over 25 years of real estate experience under her belt. She holds a degree in Economics, Management and Finance from Babson College and is fluent in English, Spanish, French and conversational in Italian. Born in Lima, Peru to an Italian-Spanish family, she has lived in Peru, Argentina, Costa Rica, England, Paris, Madrid, Miami, Boston and for the past 15 years, New York and East Hampton.

As Bertello lost her father to cancer as well as her aunt, cousin, best friend's daughter and most recently, her yellow lab pup, the Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation and their mission to eradicate cancer is a cause Bertello is happy to champion. "I am honored to be a part of this event and do my part in fighting for a cure to this terrible disease that has taken many of my loved ones," shared Bertello.

We recently caught up with the honoree to learn more about her philanthropic efforts, *The Hamptons Happening* and more.

You're committed to giving back to your community. Can you speak to how your strong real estate and hospitality experience contributes to your community and why you've chosen that route?

AB: It's interesting how things happen. I am passionate about real estate and hospitality and when I was looking for an investment property 15 years ago with my partners, one of them insisted that we look at what is now The Baker House 1650. I am Peruvian and Italian, and as soon as I walked in through that amazing antique wooden door to the back patio, I truly fell in love with the property, it felt like being in Europe. I have put my heart and soul into The Baker House 1650 and The Baker Carriage House and what I did not think about back then, in the midst of the excitement of actually being able to own it, was that it was going to allow me to give back.

My relationship with the Hamptons has completely changed since I started working on getting The Baker House ready for guests. As opposed to owning a house in this community and coming out just for the weekends, you really become part of the community and a "semi local," I would never even think about presuming that I am "a local." You get to know the business owners, and their families and friends, and start finding out what is needed in the community. You also get to know the people that work with you and in my case, they have become my Baker House family. Most of them have been with me since I opened in 2005, which I think speaks for itself. Being able to give back by donating a room for a night or two, a spa massage or allowing very worthy not for profit organizations use the space to raise funds for their charities, gives me great pleasure. I truly believe it is important to give back and it starts at home and with the causes that are important to you. I have been very fortunate in my life, but have also gone through very complicated hardships. I believe that what you give and put out there, comes back to you. Some of the charities we proudly support include LVIS, AVIS, The EH Library, St Luke's Episcopal Church, Ross School, East Hampton Middle School, The EH Town PBA, The EH Village PBA, The Firemen, The Life Guards, **ARF**, Vets International, ASCPA, SASF, **HIFF**, **Guild Hall**, The Parrish Museum, **Bay Street Theatre**, The Bass Foundation, Men Wear Pink, **Robin Hood**, Help Peru, Casa Bianca, Guarderia de Pucusana, Mision Huascanan, and this year the Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation.

The Baker House 1650 is a core piece of history for the Hamptons community. What were some of the aspects that attracted you to this ownership?

AB: The Baker House 1650 is one of the oldest continuously occupied structures in the United States. The core of the house dates back to 1648. We have found crushed sea shells, horse hair, seaweed, corn kernels, very old newspapers and few other "curiosities" in the walls. It has been at one time or another, the Town Hall, the place where they held church services, the bar, the inn and more. When we were trying to decide on a new name for it, I dove into its history. The people at the East **Hampton Library**, Bob Hefner, the town historian, and **Hugh King**, the Town Crier, were very helpful in giving us accurate information. We knew that whatever name we chose, it had to be historically accurate. As it turns out, the second owner of the house, Thomas Baker, bought it in 1650 from Captain Howe who brought many of the initial settlers to East Hampton from across the Sound when the current village pond was a cattle watering hole. Thomas Baker was one of the founding fathers of the Village of East Hampton and a very important character in the history of East Hampton, so it was only fitting to name it after him.

One of the most amazing things about the property is that all the bones are still there intact: the hand sewn wooden beams, the 9, yes 9, wood burning fireplaces, the old pot support arm for cooking that still swivels and the English Arts & Crafts exterior of the house which J. Harper Poor created with the help of the architect Joseph Greenleaf Thorp at a time of Anglophilia in East Hampton, when there even was an attempt to change East Hampton's name back to its original **Maidstone**. We are very respectful of the history of the house and understand very well what it means for the community. We love it and are only the safe keepers until the next person comes along to fulfill that job.

What does it mean to you to be recognized at *The Hamptons Happening* this year?

AB: It is a true honor and I am humbled and blissful at the same time. To be recognized by such an incredible organization as the Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation means even more. Their achievements in cancer research are above and beyond amazing, as is the way they collaborate with Institute Without Walls, as are the people involved in the Foundation. Cancer has deeply affected all of our lives one way or another, so to be able to put a grain of sand towards their very successful efforts is incredibly satisfying. We all need to do more. I have worked very hard for many years and continue to do so. I started very early, because of extreme curiosity and because I lost my father to lymph, lung and bone cancer when he was only 46-years-old. I just loved what my father did. I had a very good mentor although it was for too short of a time. Many people will say that I am a workaholic. But I am really so lucky. I get to follow my passion for real estate and hospitality every day, so is it really work or play or both? And, I get a chance to give back.

To congratulate Bertello and the other honorees, join them at this year's *The Hamptons Happening*, which will take place at 900 Lumber Lane in Bridgehampton from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. The event theme is "Tour de Cuisine" featuring food and drinks from around the world, including Bertello's native Peru. There will be live music from Pat Farrell and the Cold Spring Harbor Band - "The **Billy Joel** Tribute Show."

Tickets may be purchased at www.waxmancancer.org.