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WSWA Names Dr. John Mariani as Inaugural Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. Award Recipient

WASHINGTON, D.C., 03/06/2023 – Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) is pleased to announce Banfi Chairman Emeritus Dr. John Mariani as the inaugural Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. Award recipient. Dr. Mariani was unanimously chosen by the selection committee for the qualities that make him a H.E.R.O. (Humanitarian, Ethical, Respectful, and One-of-a-kind).

“We’re honored to recognize Dr. Mariani, who changed wine culture in the United States forever – without him few of us would be enjoying the wonderful wines of Italy,” said WSWA President and CEO Francis Creighton. “What’s even more amazing about him though -and what this award recognizes – are his philanthropic achievements over his long and storied career.”

Dr. Mariani is internationally recognized not only for the impact that he has had on the world of fine wine, but also by those who know him as a man of family, a veteran, a visionary, a scholar, an entrepreneur and philanthropist. Dr. Mariani is credited with the evolution of Banfi, his family’s company, from U.S. importer of classic wines to a pioneer of wine as one of nature’s healthiest foods, working with leading oenologists to promote healthier vineyards and more natural wine. He created the world-class Antigua resort Jumby Bay, established Castello Banfi as the world’s premier wine estate, and he worked alongside colleagues to update several of Italy’s Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) regulations.

With every milestone and success, Dr. Mariani focuses on raising the bar – fueled by a commitment to research, education and generosity of spirit. Under his leadership, Banfi implemented an intensive, decade-long Sangiovese clonal research and zonation study, publishing and sharing the results for the betterment of the wine world. Dr. Mariani is also dedicated to playing a broad philanthropic role through the Banfi Foundation, which has endowed thousands of scholarships in the hospitality sector as well as sponsored educational programs and scholastic travel. Notably, he also established the Chair of Food & Beverage Management at Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration.

The Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. award, sponsored by Breakthru Beverage Group (BBG), honors the indelible legacy of Ray Herrmann who is not only credited with one of the most accomplished, respected and distinguished careers in the wine and spirits industry, but was also a man of great character, ethics and philanthropy – a true humanitarian. The annual H.E.R.O. Award, representing Herrmann’s vibrant qualities (Humanitarian, Ethical, Respectful and One-of-a-kind) awards one individual with \$20,000 to donate to a charity of their choice.

“It is an honor to receive the inaugural Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. award, named for a distinguished colleague and dear friend. I have been fortunate to enjoy many proud moments enriching the lives of students through scholarship and experience. Education is a tenet of Banfi globally and given Ray’s generosity and passion for our industry, I have no doubt he would concur,” said Dr. Mariani. “I am grateful to WSWA and Breakthru Beverage Group for the opportunity to direct the \$20,000 award to the WSWA Educational Foundation College Scholarship Program and match it with an additional \$20,000 gift. I am pleased that 20 more scholarships will be gifted to the worthy children of our wholesalers’ families. We value helping all achieve a better wine world.”

WSWA and BBG created the H.E.R.O. Award to honor an industry titan and to inspire others to reach higher, do better and leave the wine and spirits industry and our world in a better place for those who follow. The award will be administered by WSWA and sponsored by BBG annually for a decade, effective 2023 through 2033.

About Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America

WSWA is the national trade association representing the distribution tier of the wine and spirits industry, dedicated to advancing the interests and independence of distributors and brokers of wine and spirits. Founded in 1943, WSWA has more than 380 member companies in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its members distribute more than 80 percent of all wine and spirits sold at wholesale in the United States.

To learn more, please visit www.wswa.org or connect with us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

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