

Dr. Anthony P. Vastola

1889 - 1975

Founder of UNICO - "Service above Self"

Antonio Paolo (later Anthony Paul) Vastola was born on August 13, 1889, in San Valentino Torio, Province of Salerno, Italy; the son of Francesco and Antonia (Frigenti) Vastola. He came to New Haven, Connecticut at the age of six and was educated in local schools.

He attended Yale Medical School and was awarded his medical degree from Fordham Medical School in 1912 at the age of twenty-three. He served his internship and residency at St. Mary's Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, and worked at Misericordia and Mount Sinai hospitals, also in New York City.

In 1914 Dr. Vastola established his surgical practice in Waterbury, joining the active staff of St. Mary's Hospital and the courtesy staff of Waterbury Hospital. He continued his studies with courses at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and other leading medical centers. He published numerous papers in several medical journals and was a fellow of the American College of Surgeons as well as a member of the local, state and national medical societies.

He married Annette (Watts) Vastola in 1923. They resided at 120 Cables Ave. and had three sons: Edward F. Vastola, M.D.; Anthony P. Vastola, Jr., M.D.; and James Watts Vastola, M.D.

He was a member of the Waterbury Club and a communicant of St. Margaret Church.

On October 10, 1922, fifteen men met in the library of Dr. Vastola's office at 103 North Main St. to hold the first official meeting of a new civic club for professional and business men of Italian origin. Dr. Vastola had suggested the founding of such an organization after it was noted that no one with an Italian name had been invited to join local service clubs. Dr. Vastola himself had been denied membership in a country club. Although there were many social, fraternal, religious and mutual aid societies in the Italian community, there were no service clubs that placed community above fraternity. The uniqueness of this new organization was the inspiration for its name - Unico ("unique" in Italian), which was adopted at a subsequent meeting at the Elton. As an acronym, UNICO came to symbolize Unity, Neighborliness, Integrity, Charity and Opportunity.

The charter members agreed that they had seen evidence of discrimination in jobs at some factories and businesses and that children required vocational guidance and financial assistance in pursuit of higher education. They also recognized the necessity for representation in political circles, government and the judiciary. They adopted the Rotary Club's motto "Service Above Self".



UNICO's mission is: To stimulate among men of Italian descent the desire of each member to be of some service to his fellowmen and to society in general. To encourage high ethical standards both in business and in professions. To perform charitable, educational and patriotic deeds for the benefit of their fellowmen and their country.

UNICO expanded to a national organization in 1929, added a separate group "Ladies of UNICO" in 1969, and in 1997 invited women into UNICO itself.

Headquartered in Fairfield, New Jersey; UNICO National has become the largest Italian American service organization. True to its origins, its 7,000 members in 130 chapters throughout 17 states support charities, grant scholarships, endow academic chairs in Italian Studies, promote Italian culture and address discrimination and bias issues.

Dr. Vastola retired from his practice in 1970. He died on May 27, 1975, leaving a unique legacy of service and leadership along with a profound love and appreciation of his Italian heritage.