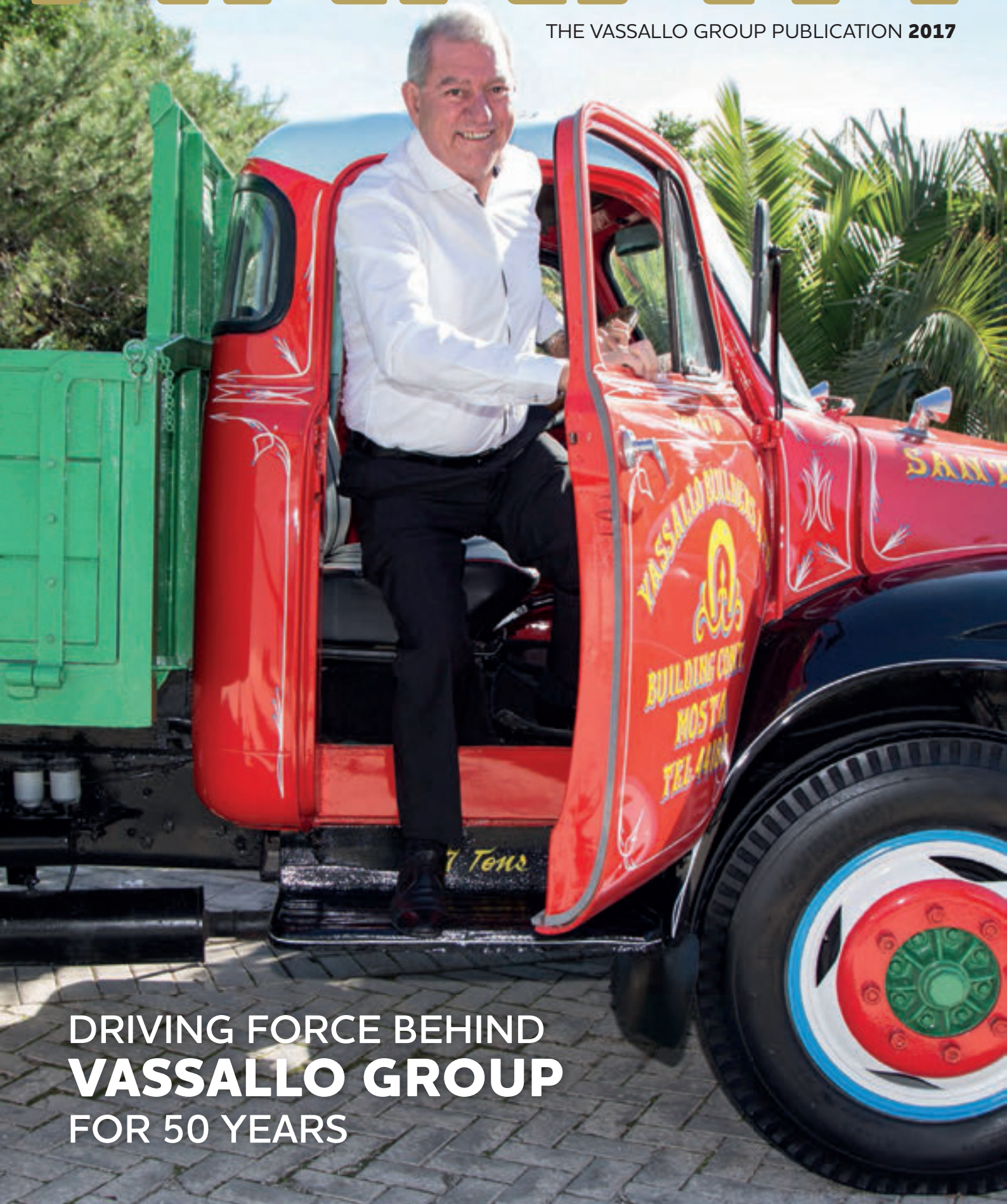


ARKATI

THE VASSALLO GROUP PUBLICATION **2017**



DRIVING FORCE BEHIND
VASSALLO GROUP
FOR 50 YEARS



TRADITION. INNOVATION. DIVERSITY.

1946 - 2017

With a heritage spanning over seven decades, Vassallo Group is one of Malta's most well established and successful companies, with a staff complement of over 1,700 and investments in a larger variety of key macro sectors mainly in:

CONSTRUCTION

ELDERLY CARE

DISABILITY

CATERING

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

BESPOKE FURNITURE

HOSPITALITY

ENERGY

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Vassallo Group Malta



VASSALLO GROUP

SINCE 1946

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ARKATI

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of *Arkati*. We would, first and foremost, like to pay tribute to our Chairman, Nazzareno Vassallo, who this year celebrated his 50th anniversary at the helm of Vassallo Group.

It is an image that reflects the Group's proud history, steadfast values and drive to move forward. Indeed, 2017 has been a highly successful year. As our CEO, Pio Vassallo, explains in his statement, Vassallo Group's performance has been nothing short of exceptional.

The Group completed the refurbishment of the Phoenicia Hotel as well as finishing Quantum Place in Ta' Xbiex, a high-end commercial seafront building. Meanwhile, the Riviera Hotel in Marfa has been transformed and there are several projects on the horizon such as the Lands End hotel in Sliema and the huge residential campus at the University – to mention just two.

But, as readers will see in this issue of *Arkati*, Vassallo Group is about so much more than construction. Through CareMalta and associated initiatives such as HILA, it has shown the country that it is a caring organisation. And it also has a strong catering brand in CaterEssence.

Of course, as is also highlighted in this magazine, the Group is fully focused on its staff who are at the centre of everything we do. May I, on behalf of the management, wish you all the very best for the festive season and I hope you enjoy this commemorative publication which showcases your achievements.

Charlo Bonnici

Director, HR and Communications

ON THE COVER

Nazzareno Vassallo is fittingly featured on the front cover of this issue together with a truck presented to him with as a gift to mark this great milestone, which is a replica of one of six Bedford J Type trucks operated by Vassallo Builders in the early 1970s. The Company's first two drivers – Charlie Vassallo, the Chairman's brother, and cousin Zaren – sat behind the wheel of two similar vehicles called Flamingo and San Francisco, whereas this replica has been named Santa Marija after the patron saint of Mosta.

A portrait of Nazzareno Vassallo, Chairman of Vassallo Group. He is an older man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue striped tie. He is sitting at a desk, holding a pen over a notepad. The background is a large aerial photograph of a city grid, with the text 'St George's' visible on the left side.

NAZZARENO VASSALLO
CHAIRMAN, VASSALLO GROUP



A private company with a public conscience

Nazzareno Vassallo has built an empire that started from his father's humble business in the dusty, lucrative sites of construction and moved on to become the pioneer in the sectors of private care and hospitality. Today, Vassallo Group is among the leaders in developing public projects, real estate, catering, hotels and care for the elderly and the disabled.

At 65, Zaren, as he is fondly known, is still the reference point and driving force of Vassallo Group and although he does occasionally contemplate retirement, it remains a fleeting thought.

Ten years ago, determined not to remain the company's sounding board and mentor, he moved out of the Group's headquarters at Three Arches to Villa Amodeo, a property in his beloved Mosta that he had coveted for years.

Celebrating 50 years at the helm, the fire driving his vision shows no sign of being extinguished. His eyes still gleam when he discusses a new project and he now focuses on the areas he loves most, safe in the knowledge that his five children and loyal team of executives will continue to expand and diversify the legacy of Vassallo Group.

Peering into the past with a sense of nostalgia, he shares his accomplishments and vision to keep taking the Group from strength to strength: "If I succeeded, anyone can!"

On the company's inception

My father was a farmer and when I left school at 15 one thing was clear in my mind: I was never going to become a farmer. I had big dreams and a thirst to change the status quo.

The youngest of five brothers, from a total of 12 siblings, I joined my father who had set up the business 70 years ago.

Dozens of contractors and workers from the industry must have started under my father's guidance. He was a good man with a huge 'quiet' influence, but we were very different.

In those days there was no bookkeeping and nothing was recorded – transactions depended on the memory of whoever you were doing business with, and everything was paid in cash. I immediately realised we could no longer run the business without records.

Obviously, at 15 nobody had taught me how to handle this so I started visiting Emanuel Attard, a civil servant par excellence, and he would guide me on bookkeeping. He encouraged me and that was when I started dreaming about creating a company, instead of operating as a partnership.

In 1971, the construction company Vassallo Builders was registered. I was just 18 and that was when my father and brothers entrusted me with changing the system.



We were innovative then and we have remained innovative now. It's what keeps me going to this day; it's the challenge that drives me.

On the challenges of running a family business

In 1985, I bought the shares of my father and brothers and became the company's sole owner. I was determined to do things differently, and ensure my five children would have the opportunity to join the business.

I know it sounds unusual but I involved my kids as shareholders when my youngest was just six months old – in fact, I needed legal permission as they were all minors. I didn't want them to go through what I experienced to finally get their share. I wanted them to feel they were the rightful owners from day one.

But I also appointed non-family members to top positions and started widening our company portfolio, operating as a holding company and creating new subsidiaries. I wanted my children to work together, yet be apart.

Is it healthy? I think it is once you achieve the balance I tried to create. My vision is that they don't step on each other's toes in the same business. They all have their own area and expertise.

I've also recently appointed Tonio Depasquale, who represents a fatherly figure for them, as chairman of the operating companies to allow me to ease out slowly and not remain the company's sole reference point.

It'll be another challenge when my grandchildren grow up. I keep thinking of succession. I'd like them to be involved in a controlled manner after I leave.

On a mission to care

We care, we really do. In the early 1990s, Casa Arkati could have been a block of flats but I wanted to leave a legacy; a project with a social conscience that still made business sense. The choices before me were either a private school, a private hospital or a home for the elderly. We chose the latter because we felt it was the most pressing need for society in the light of an ageing population.

As a construction company, we didn't have the right expertise so we sought the advice of British specialists to set off on the right track, and then eventually took over.

Today, we have a number of homes for the elderly, and as a person I'm happier increasing the number of beds than taking a dividend at the end of the year. Of course, it's nice to reap the profits but it's a double win if we increase the business.

It makes me happy that in past 18 months the Group has become involved in three different care sectors: private homes for the elderly through CareMalta; we are running HILA and Hand In Hand from Casa Apap Bologna, services for persons with disabilities and autism; and we've now inaugurated the latest exciting project run by HILA to transform Casa Santa Monica into a specialised home for ALS, MS and neurological patients, today known as Dar Bjorn. This home is the brainchild of Bjorn Formosa who suffers from this degenerative disease.

We are, and we plan to remain, a private company with a public conscience.

On retirement

What will I do if I retire? I love my work, I love to dream about new projects and that will never die. For me embarking on a new project is like going on an adventure. I had always said I wanted to stop working either after 40 years of work or when I became a grandfather, whichever came first. These two milestones coincidentally took place within a week of each other but I went to work the next day.





Villa Amodeo in Mosta



Then, at my next attempt, we were working on the home for the elderly in Mellieħa, and I couldn't exactly stop halfway. The day we inaugurated the home should have been my retirement party, but I still turned up for work that week.

However, I did take one strategic decision and that was to move out of the headquarters to an office I had set up in Villa Amodeo in Mosta.

I moved out to give my children a chance to grow without having me continuously by their side, doubling up as their sounding board, and to take responsibility for the day-to-day decisions. I think it's worked.

Villa Amodeo still acts like the power station of the Group, but The Three Arches delivers the vision.

I actually increased not decreased the hours I put into the business because I enjoy what I do. Here, at the villa, I spend as many hours as I want. I'm happy in this space.

The company, which employs more than 1,700 people, continues

to make great strides and we're on track to achieve our Vision 2020 targets.

On the fear of failure

The fear of failure is with you all the time, but I'm not scared. What keeps me going is the determination to succeed and the energy to persevere until I obtain the results I want. One of the principles that has guided me throughout the years is to never take on a job you cannot complete.

Who is Zaren?

Difficult to say. Zaren is a lot of things. I am a man with a finger in many pies, and I'd like to think I'm the Guardian Angel of Mosta, the town where I was brought up.

I considered myself poor when I set out and I didn't want to die poor. If I succeeded, everybody can. I'm nothing special; I'm just blessed with a determination to succeed. ■

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If I succeeded, anyone can!



Committed to growth and enduring partnerships



PIO VASSALLO
CEO, VASSALLO GROUP

I am delighted to say the Group's performance over the past year has been exceptional. Despite stiff competition, we have been very active in all sectors and 2017 could well be a record year.

We completed the refurbishment of the iconic Phoenicia Hotel for third-party owners, as well as finished Quantum Place in Ta' Xbiex, a high-end commercial seafront building in which we have a 50 per cent shareholding. Meanwhile, the Riviera Hotel in Marfa, which our Group also co-owns, has been completely transformed.

Vassallo Group is not about to take its foot off the pedal in the hospitality industry, where we have nurtured our

expertise over many years, and will shortly be embarking upon a new hotel project in Sliema called Lands End. We will be joint owners of this four-star property, which we expect will open in 2019.

Malta is experiencing a boom period, and we are very happy to form part of the country's success. Hotels are managing to attract higher rates than ever before and as a nation we have improved our ability to market our products and services.

Though we are constantly on the lookout for new opportunities, we have been in business too long to get carried away. We select projects and initiatives very carefully, investing only in properties we believe offer high-value to us and the country as a whole.

Though our Group today is very diverse – encompassing reputable construction, hospitality, elderly care, catering and joinery divisions – we remain committed to enduring partnerships that have sustained us for many years and which we believe have enabled us to expand in directions that would otherwise not have been possible.



Vassallo Group is not about to take its foot off the pedal in the hospitality industry

We will continue to pursue this line, though perhaps with more emphasis on our core operations. In fact, recently we took a conscious decision to pull out of sectors we feel are peripheral and concentrate, instead, on what we do best – like the care sector, for example. CareMalta currently operates eight facilities housing 1,400 clients, and is working on opening another two. This is an important area for us and we are looking to expand.

The approach we have taken to our business is paying dividends and has helped the Group earn an enviable reputation with clients and financial institutions. People know they can trust us... and that is important. Though we do not like to shout about our achievements, we have developed a rare ability – because of the many services we offer in-house – to take on a project and turn it around quickly. This is a big asset.

We also remain totally committed to our people, giving them opportunities and the space to work. I have been involved with this organisation since I was a youngster, working my way up from the bottom, and therefore recognise the importance of valuing each and every one of my colleagues – from a manager to an operative.

We do our best to foster a sense of ownership and belonging, never more so than today in a changing human resources landscape, which has seen us embrace employees from more than 50 countries who have different





outlooks, cultures and religions. Anyone who wants to make a contribution is welcome in our organisation.

I anticipate another active year for the Group in 2018. We won a tender to build and operate the new residential campus complex at the University of Malta and are very much looking forward to realising this exciting project, which will also comprise a strong commercial element. Meanwhile, we hope to bring to fruition a long-planned industrial park in Burmarrad and are seeking to once again embark on initiatives connected with the education sector.

So, there is much to look forward to. But at heart we remain a family business with a social conscience – always on the lookout for opportunities and challenges – that is passionate about everything we do. Pride and passion are undoubtedly the most important ingredients, because without them nothing would be possible. At Vassallo Group, the whole is greater than the sum of individual parts and that is what continues to drive us forward. ■



Riviera Hotel



Land's End Hotel



Quantum Place

Setting the gold standard for care

Going through the paperwork with her PA you can tell that the mind of Natalie Briffa Farrugia is whirring with ideas, but she puts these on pause the minute she sits down for the interview.

The CEO of CareMalta emanates empathy and when she recounts the issues of families and elderly that she faces on a daily basis you can tell that the job has not succeeded in immunising her against the suffering of others. On the contrary, you know she cares.

“CareMalta means a lot to me. It’s not work but a vocation. My ambition is to make a difference to people’s life,” she says.

This ambition she speaks about is not just talk, it is her mission that by 2020 everyone on her team will be providing a consistent level of dedicated care to the residents in the numerous homes CareMalta operates.

As CareMalta gears up to celebrate its 25th anniversary, Natalie is working on developing a training programme for all employees to have one unified service attitude that runs seamlessly from the top management, to the receptionists, carers and the nurses.

“This is not a one-off training plan. By 2020 we want every employee to be distinguished by their attitude. The



By 2020 we want every employee to be distinguished by their attitude

NATALIE BRIFFA FARRUGIA

message is iCARE. It’s a big challenge but we’re gearing up for it,” Natalie says.

With 1,036 employees, CareMalta owns four private homes – Casa Arkati, Villa Messina, Roseville and Casa San Paolo. It also manages four other government homes through a

public private partnership – Żejtun home, Bormla home, Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieħa, Zammit Clapp.

Vassallo Group has been a pioneer in providing private care for the elderly and Natalie is intent on remaining a leader in the field by setting the gold standard for others to follow suit.

“I want our service users to be experiencing the same level of care, no matter whose shift they’re on or which home they’re in.

“So far we have ambassadors – there are just hints of it – but I want everyone to realise we’re social entrepreneurs and this has to be reflected in their attitude. We will be incorporating this practice of compassion, professionalism and engagement in everything, in our appraisals, our policies and audits.”

Looking back on the past year, Natalie smiles and describes it as one where a particularly challenging decision gave her a clear snapshot into the depths of humanity – those who despite the hardship understood the reasoning behind the decision and were supportive, and those who tried to abuse of the situation by leeching the system.

This involved the phased closure of the Prince of Wales, which provided



From 0 – 25! Staff from Vassallo Group are training to go from 0 to 25km to celebrate CareMalta’s silver anniversary next year. Twenty-five staff members will be walking the Malta Half Marathon while another 25 will be running in February 2018 to mark this milestone.





independent living in the heart of Sliema. This decision formed part of the company's five-year consolidation plan and was taken after the concept did not work as well as expected.

"It is a sad reality, but a challenge we had to face. My decision is always based on CareMalta's values of quality, safety, dignity, integrity, and development. In everything I do I assess myself against these five values. I score myself against these. I think I scored well on this challenge. It was a tough decision, but one that was taken with leadership and care," Natalie says.

In the meantime, CareMalta is focusing further on consolidating its strengths – investing in nursing expertise as the world faces up to the challenges of an ageing population.

She does not believe that increasing the number of homes for the elderly is the solution and is convinced there will be a complete revolution in the provision of care because people are living longer with a better quality of life.

"This burst in the number of homes concerns me as not everybody will be needing to stay in one. My view for the

future is a focus on the provision of different tailor-made services," she says.

She is more alarmed about the increasing prevalence of dementia than ageing itself. As she continues to pursue her studies in this area, Natalie fears nobody is prepared for the high influx of dementia sufferers society will face.

"At the end of vision 2020 this will be one of my focuses, but it's still in its infancy. Let's all collectively make an effort to invest in this sector. Ageing should not be about doom or gloom!" 🟡





Touched by clients' unconditional love



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You only understand
the extent of the
unconditional love
once you
experience it

JANET SILVIO

Casa Apap Bologna has become a place where friendships flourish, and Janet Silvio hopes that the same feeling of an extended family thrives at the new home in Qormi, dedicated for the care of those suffering from ALS and neurological conditions.

This is the second house that is opening its doors under the umbrella of HILA (Home to Independence and Limitless Abilities), set up in 2015. And Janet, the executive director of HILA, is dedicated to the cause.

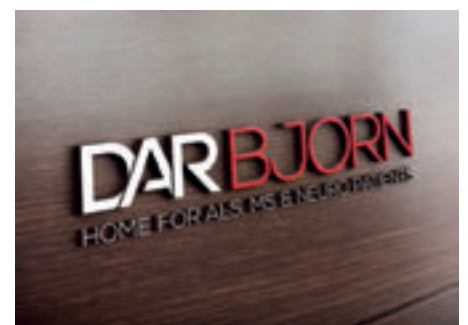
Originally called Casa Santa Monica, it changed its name when “destiny introduced the group to Bjorn Formosa”, the 31-year-old man who set up the ALS Malta Foundation after he was diagnosed with the condition himself.

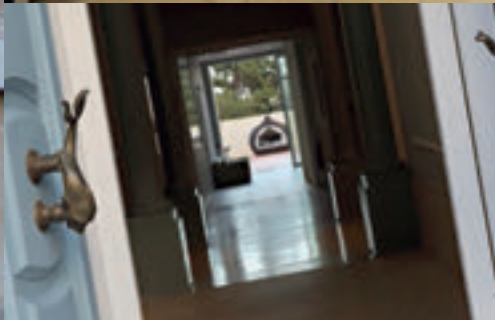
HILA’s initial plan for the house, cradled in the centre of Qormi, was to create a residential home for independent supported living for people with disability.

“When we heard of Bjorn’s wish to have a home for people with neurological conditions, we wondered whether we could help out, without initially thinking of the Santa Monica house, which was being refurbished.”

In April, HILA met Bjorn, who had started his own discussions with the government. In the meantime, he had also started collecting funds to furnish the house with inclusive equipment, such as electronics that function through eye-gaze technology.

HILA wants its services to be more financially accessible to people with a





disability and their carers, and its discussions with the government about other homes are geared towards a PPP (Public Private Partnership) within this sector.

How does the Vassallo Group bridge business and care?

"The Vassallo family decided to invest in this sector for a social purpose. HILA aims to be sustainable to generate enough to re-invest back in this sector."

When three years ago the Group felt the need to expand its care services to the disability sector and

Janet was asked to step in, she immediately accepted this challenge, as she believed the sector required a lot of support.

She spent a good year researching and looking into what was already available, networking and meeting with people with a disability, their parents and service providers. And that is how HILA was born.

HILA's first project was that of Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta, which started hosting clients last year. This care home, the first of its kind for Malta, has adopted a universal design, meaning it is accessible from all aspects, whether intellectual or physical.

The house provides clients – and their carers – with respite that can last an afternoon or weeks, however, it is not a permanent residential home.

Each client has their own care plan, and this can include anything from a life skills programme, to going for a walk. Some help out with the upkeep of the house and lay the table before dinner, or wash the dishes afterwards.

The house also hosts monthly "fun-filled, live-in weekends", which Janet tries not to miss.

"It's a personal pleasure to be there, and I really miss our clients when I have to skip a weekend. You only understand the extent of the unconditional love that you receive from a person with a disability once you experience it." ■





Unlocking the future for children with autism

When the partnership between CareMalta and Hand in Hand Malta was announced on World Autism Day in April, it was an emotional moment for CEO Jacqueline Abela DeGiovanni to see three of her nine-year-old clients take to the podium to deliver a speech they had penned themselves.

"These three children had been with us since they were two years old," Jacqueline explains, adding that Hand in Hand had been operational as a one-to-one service since 2008.

"When they first came to us, they were non-verbal, had challenging behaviour and a lot of difficulties.

"Seeing them up there, microphone in hand, reading out a speech they had written themselves was truly something," she says in a voice choked with emotion.

The partnership with Hand in Hand Ltd was born after Jacqueline met Vassallo Group director Christian Vassallo, who helped realise her dream for children with autism. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others.

"In the past, I was only able to offer one-to-one sessions – now we have a school, as well as one-to-one services," the accredited play therapist says.

Located in Mosta, Hand in Hand offers two classes, attended by children aged three to six: some of whom visit five times a week, while others split their time between Hand in Hand and their mainstream school.

"Our aim is to give children the necessary skills to enable them to eventually be reintegrated into



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Seeing them up there... was truly something

JACQUELINE ABELA DEGIOVANNI



mainstream. We teach them turn-taking skills, how to learn, what is adequate behaviour and how to play with other children.”

Each class is highly individualised, consisting of a maximum of six children accompanied by three therapists.

For children who would have just been diagnosed with autism and who would have severe behavioural issues, there are intensive one-to-one sessions held for 20 hours a week.

Services comprise applied behaviour analysis (ABA), occupational therapy, speech therapy and physiotherapy.

What advice would she give parents of children with autism?

“Do not wait,” Jacqueline says emphatically. “Early intervention is crucial because a child’s mind is more

malleable in the early years and therefore success rates are higher.

“Unfortunately, there are parents who do not accept this and there are also professionals who wrongly advise parents to wait. Early intervention is never harmful.

“However, early intervention needs to be evidence based – ABA is the only evidence-based intervention for children with autism so it’s important to go for the right intervention, otherwise precious time would still be lost.” ■

Christian Vassallo’s passion for Hand in Hand is contagious. His eyes glow when he speaks of his desire for children with learning disabilities to be given the best opportunity possible to reach their full potential.

“Jacqueline is someone who has dedicated her life to bettering children’s futures. Her specialisation in early intervention has left an impact on hundreds of children as well as their families, as when therapy fails to work, it puts a lot of stress on families.

“When we met Jacqueline, we felt we could contribute by providing her with a more robust infrastructure for her to deliver a better service and reach more students.

“If we could help unlock the future for just one child, then that is already more than enough.”



Investing in the future

This has been another record year for Vassallo Builders – yet possibly the highlight has been celebrations marking the chairman's 50 years at the helm of Vassallo Group, according to Director Cost Control and Logistics at Vassallo Group Neville Calleja and Deputy CEO and Commercial Director of Vassallo Builders Jonathan Buttigieg.

"We had four days of continuous celebrations," Jonathan says. "There was such a warm, nostalgic atmosphere and we were joined by former employees – now pensioners – whom we hadn't seen in a while."

"Neville and myself have been here for over 25 years so we knew them all – there was a lovely sense of nostalgia filled with many reminiscences."

"Our chairman looked so happy – he had tears in his eyes. We all look up to him as a father figure. It was a great way to end a successful year."

2017 has also been packed with numerous projects, notably the refurbishment of the Riviera Hotel in Marfa, the Phoenicia Hotel in Floriana, Quantum Place in Ta' Xbiex and Villa Messina in Floriana.

The year also saw the commencement of works on the new Land's End Boutique Hotel in Sliema, with the demolition of the existing property needing to be completed within a tight timeframe before the summer season was ushered in.



Our chairman looked so happy – he had tears in his eyes

JONATHAN BUTTIGIEG

However, Neville points out, Vassallo Builders' largest and most important project by far is the new residence and community centre for the University of Malta.

The Group will be making the largest investment in its history – some €25 million – and it is envisaged that the proposed development will be accommodated

within a footprint measuring 11,000 square metres.

The community complex will incorporate four underground parking levels catering for approximately 456 car park spaces, five residential units including 670 rooms and 930 beds, various commercial outlets and other amenities such as a language school, sports courts, a gymnasium and a swimming pool.

The skyline of each block will vary in height, with the highest block towering 13 floors above road level.

The project is currently at the design stage and a building permit is expected to be issued during the first quarter of 2018.

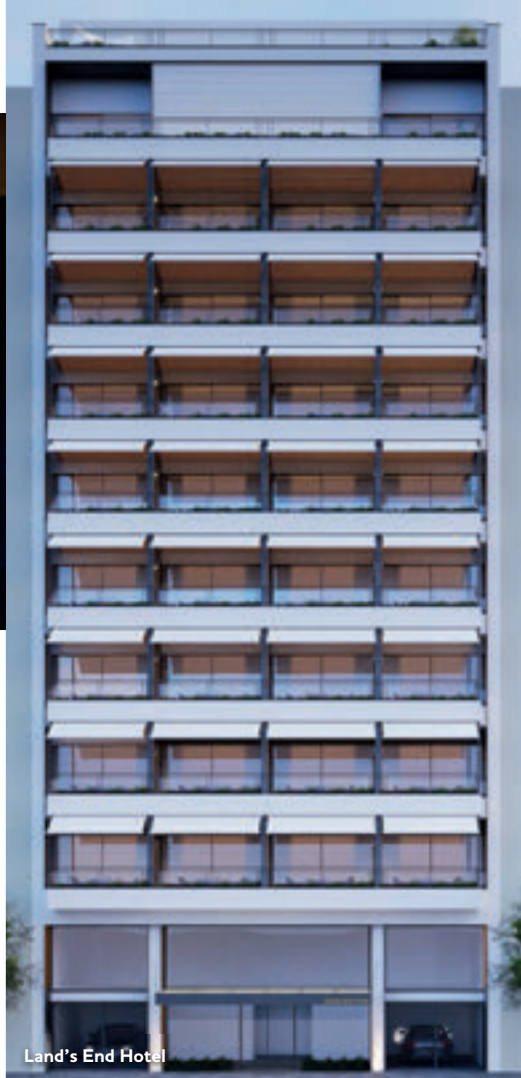
2018 will also see the completion of the One-One-O Luxury Development at The Strand (ex-Forestals showroom) comprising a complex of some 30 apartments.

Meanwhile, another internal project features the relocation of the Group's current concrete batching plant in the limits of Burmarrad which is to be replaced by a new industrial park.

Despite the widespread feel-good factor in the construction industry, what are its difficulties?

Jonathan says that a lack of human resources remains the number one challenge.

"Shortage of labour is a factor which many other European



Land's End Hotel



Land's End Hotel site

countries are also facing. Companies must either resort to untrained labour or to bringing over workers from foreign employment agencies – which is akin to renting a service.

“The only way to deal with a lack of resources is to either train or subcontract. That is how we are evolving – in the coming years we will have to adjust to the situation and adapt.”



The Group recognises that in order to grow in terms of turnover and profitability, it needs to invest back into the business. Plant equipment, tools and truck and crane fleets are constantly upgraded to newer and more efficient models.

Human resources is also an area that requires substantial investment. Jonathan illustrates this fact by noting that Vassallo Group pays over €25 million a year in wages and salaries. Appraisal reviews are undertaken frequently with the aim of advancing employees' salaries.

“We strongly believe in internal investment,” Jonathan says. “We invest in on-the-job training and also cover all expenses related to university courses aimed at furthering an employee's career with the company.

“These little things make all the difference. That it is the only way you can retain your workforce – and this eliminates any concern about job poaching because our working conditions are difficult to beat. Our people are the pillars of our company.” ■



“

Our most important project is the new University residence and community centre

NEVILLE CALLEJA



Riviera Hotel



The George Hotel



For the love of property

To find the inspiration for Realty – Vassallo Group’s recently set up property arm – one has to go a long way back. Further than this company’s CEO, architect Ruben Vassallo; further than the Group chairman, Nazzareno; further, even, than his father.

The seeds lie with the chairman’s grandfather. “I did a presentation recently,” Ruben explains, “recounting a phrase he used to repeatedly tell my father. ‘If people see a room in a field and it’s yours, they will say Zaren owns that room... but even if you have a million in the bank, nobody will say Zaren owns the bank.’”

It is a mantra that has been at the core of Vassallo Group since its inception, but one not given structure till this year with the formation of Realty – which conceives, builds and manages the Group’s properties as well as focusing on property management.



“

Realty reflects our love of property and collecting it so to speak

RUBEN VASSALLO

“Realty reflects our love of property and collecting it so to speak. We have always seen ourselves as owners rather than developers – in fact, when we have sold property, we have invariably regretted it! – and what this company does is bring our different properties under one umbrella,” Ruben says.

He adds that the Group has been able to resist the temptation to sell properties – even in the midst of a boom – because it has a vast and diverse portfolio coupled with a long-term approach to business.

“Having a strong asset base is a big plus for the company and means we can invest more in enhancing growth and turnover. We want to continue investing in our portfolio, develop properties to a high standard and manage them.”

This means that Realty is studying the market all the time, always on the



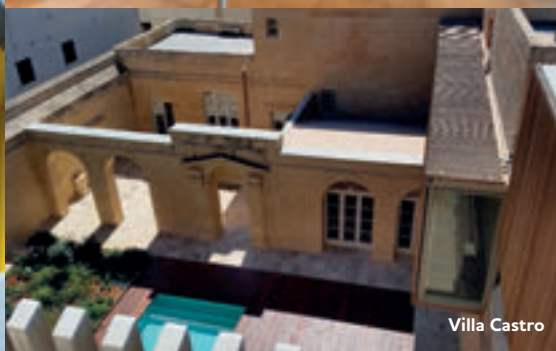
The Landmark



One-One-O



GO outlets

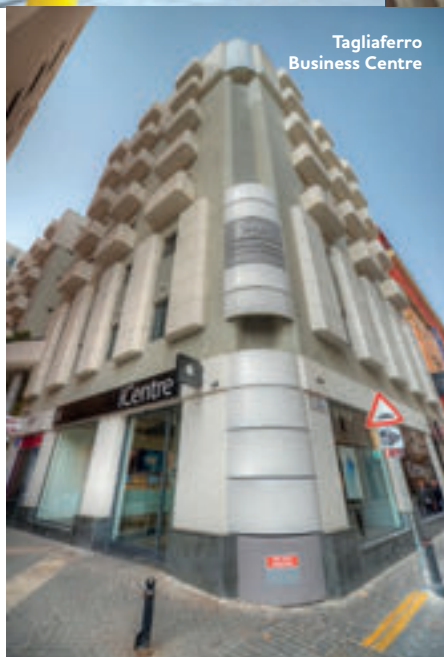


Villa Castro

lookout for new projects if the location and price are right, particularly in markets that it feels are under-exposed.

Realty is also open to partnership proposals if another party can bring a distinct area of expertise to the table. Since it is able to call on the many facets of the Group when it comes to turning a concept into reality, projects tend to be realised quickly. “We have a very strong background as a construction company and this is a huge advantage as it endows us with a certain flexibility that others find hard to emulate and means we can mobilise quickly,” Ruben says.

Realty has already amassed an impressive portfolio: including the Landmark retail and office building in Qormi, the Tagliaferro Business Centre in Sliema, the high-end Quantum offices in Ta’ Xbiex and the recently refurbished Riviera Hotel in Marfa.



Tagliaferro Business Centre

“A couple of years ago there wasn’t really a market for office space in Malta, but today many companies are setting up here and it’s an area that has grown exponentially,” Ruben says.

The Group also has a long and established history in the hospitality industry and owns several hotels, such as The George in St Julian’s, in partnership with Claret Holdings. “We have identified this as an area of growth. We have good partners in this field, so it is a win-win for both parties.”

Realty is also working on bringing to fruition a 25,000 square metre industrial park in Burmarrad, catering mainly for storage and distribution facilities, and has embarked on the second phase of another residential project in Sliema, known as One-One-O, which will be completed by the end of next year.

“Realty has great potential and represents what we are fundamentally about: buying and developing well and maximising what we have,” Ruben says.

If he were still around today, Ruben’s great-grandfather would be a very happy man indeed. ■

A team that surpasses targets and sets higher goals

When Vassallo Group strategic director Christian Vassallo graduated as a chartered director from the Institute of Directors in London in 2014, he returned to Malta driven by a desire to extend the Group's vision in business planning.

Now known as Vision 2020, Christian initially pitched the idea to his father, Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo.

"Ever the gentleman with immense business sense, he said: 'We'll do this and we'll do this

throughout'. I remember presenting him with three different scenarios in terms of targets: a conservative, realistic and optimistic view – and he pushed for the latter."

This was followed by various meetings with the CEOs and financial controllers of the different companies within the Group to fine-tune the business strategy for each and every subsidiary.

Apart from aiming for a general improvement in the environment, offices and general

working experience of employees, the targets consisted of three main financial targets: creating more business in terms of revenue, more net asset value for shareholders and net profit to help the Group sustain growth and the people who depend on it.

This kicked off in October 2015. Even though the targets were very aggressive and people thought it was a bit of a stretch, by 2018 all these targets will have been met.

"In fact, the CEOs have now thrown the ball back into my court to set a





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We are very proud that 60 per cent of our workforce are women

CHRISTIAN VASSALLO

vision with higher targets for the next five years,” he chuckles.

Vassallo Group is one of the largest family businesses on the island and is responsible for the employment of 1,700 families – a figure which, Christian adds, the Group intends to increase to 2,000 within the next three years.

In a country where gender imbalance on company boards frequently makes headlines, Vassallo Group takes equality very seriously.

Over the past year, three women were appointed to key roles: Janet Silvio as executive director of HILA Homes; Jackie Cordina as executive director of the Group’s property companies; and Jacqueline Abela DeGiovanni as CEO of Hand in Hand.

“We are very proud that 60 per cent of our workforce are women and that most are over the age of 40 and working in their first job. We also have an academy with structured training programmes.

“Vassallo Group was not just set up by my father but also by my mother, who is still a board director. The decision-making process is enhanced when there are people with different opinions and backgrounds.

“Today Vassallo Group employs over 50 different nationalities and in terms of equality we want to ensure that everyone is fairly represented.

“If Vassallo Group gets it right, I feel that other companies will follow suit. Our role is not just to generate profit and employment, but we also have a big responsibility to play in society.”

Vassallo Group has been a pioneer in the field of care and it has improved the quality of life of more than 7,000 guests who resided at CareMalta’s homes. The care sector, together with



the construction and property sectors, form the three main arches that symbolise Vassallo Group.

The Group’s catering arm, CaterEssence – of which Christian is executive director – is also following hard on the heels of the three main companies.

The 2020 Vision was the most aggressive on CaterEssence since, as Christian puts it, it was the “new kid on the block”. It is now the leader in hotel catering, servicing nine hotels, 13 retirement homes, and 150 coffee shops and restaurants. It also operates its own brand called The Cake Box, with the sixth outlet being opened in Ta’ Xbiex.

“Over the summer, we have reached days where we were producing over 10,000 meals a day. Its years as a start-up are well and truly over and it is now time to consolidate and grow.” ■



Flexibility key to gender balance in the workplace

Flexibility is imperative for the work-life balance of Charlene Vella Vassallo as she juggles between parenthood, advancing her studies, and gradually increasing her workload at The Three Arches.

Charlene, a director and shareholder of the Vassallo Group, graduated in law six years ago and is currently reading for her Masters of Law in Human Rights of the Child at the University of London.

In the meantime, her responsibilities within the Group have been limited to board meetings and the occasional legal issue, as she prioritises the upbringing of her three kids, aged four, three and one.

The youngest, Layla, is still quite dependent on her mother, Charlene notes, as she settles behind the desk in her new office, from where she can keep an eye on the little one.

Right across from her, at the other end of the room, Layla sits down on a pink carpet delineating a little play area. She tugs at a yellow wooden tower crane, which forms part of a toy set of construction-related machinery – a reminder of the Group's legacy within the building sector.



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Women seem more attached to society and sensitive to what is going on around them

CHARLENE VELLA VASSALLO

Charlene believes that she can be more productive if her children are with her in the same room while at work, especially when they are a few months old.



“I can focus more on what I'm doing if Layla is with me in the same room, as mentally I won't be out of the office, wondering what she might be doing. I'm also not rushed into completing the task at hand, as I'm not tied down with a particular time to leave the office to pick her up,” she says.

Charlene explains that Layla is always with her wherever she goes and the board members are very understanding. It is a flexibility she believes more employers should adopt.

How does she ensure that it does not impact her productivity?



This boils down to an enabling environment, with a flexible schedule – not a rigid clocking in at 8am and out at 5pm rota. Flexibility is also important when it comes to the day's agenda, with meetings not set at the same time that parents have to drop off or pick up their children from school.

"The most important thing is that you complete the tasks that you've been entrusted with. It's irrelevant how and where you complete a task – whether here or at home."

She admits that juggling a family, study and work, even though limited,

makes her tired, but her desire to be a role model for her children keeps her going.

She is a strong believer that being with her offspring during the first couple of years is very important for their development.

Once her daughter settles down in the coming months, Charlene will increase her workload with the Group. In line with her profession, she wants to be more involved in legal matters, such as company contracts.

She knows of other women within the Group who have

maintained a healthy work and family life balance, and it is something she celebrates.

Asked why she thinks there should be a gender mix at all levels, she notes that women can bring different perspectives to the table because their life experience is different from that of men.

"Women seem more attached to society and sensitive to what is going on around them in the community. And as a business, we ultimately provide a service to people, whether it has to do with catering, care services, property or construction." ■



Loyalty and innovation drive CaterEssence's competitive edge

CaterEssence is the fastest growing company within Vassallo Group, going from a company operating a single central processing unit in one location serving one specific industry to a fully-fledged contract catering business.

The business today specialises in three very distinct verticals: hotel contract catering, care home contract catering, and retail, which is the fastest growing division, executive chairman Alex Tranter says.

"Not only do we come into contact with different sectors but we also share knowledge of lessons learned across the entire company.

"When you're dealing with a company, which employs over 70 chefs and more than 200 food service personnel, you can rely on an entire team to keep the show going. Not many companies in Malta can ensure such business continuity."

The largest division remains hotel contract catering, with the company servicing several hotels, ranging from three- to four-star hotels with a varied selection of breakfast, lunch and dinner options. Menus are designed and styled following close consultation

with the hotel operator or owner, and after detailed analysis of the hotel's clientele, ambience and kitchen and dining facilities.

"The hotel owner's decision to subcontract such a key and sensitive element of its operation to a third-party caterer is a delicate one.

"Naturally, anyone taking this decision must deal with professionals who have a solid company and the financial backing not to let them down. We feel especially honoured when entrusted by an operator to be their exclusive caterer. This means a lot to us."

"We are also very honoured to be part of the Vassallo Group. This means that we not only have our company name to protect but also our Group's reputation."

The care home division, on the other hand, provides 13 care homes with lunch and dinner on a daily basis through a cook-chill system.

"The challenge here is to present a varied menu that is carefully designed to meet the dietary requirements of elderly people while still keeping the menu interesting and palatable."

Four years ago, CaterEssence also launched its own retail food outlet –



The Cake Box in Sliema



The Cake Box, Park Towers Supermarket in St Julian's



The Cake Box. Today, it has five outlets in Qormi, Mosta, Paceville, St Julian's and Sliema, which apart from offering a tasty choice of sweet pastries also provide a fresh range of healthy foods under the brand name 'fresh eats'.

"We pride ourselves on being different by offering a vast range of both savoury and pastry items under one roof. A key strength is that we produce all the food ourselves so we can control the entire supply chain, ensuring our clients enjoy freshly prepared items."

The restaurant sector is the latest retail addition to the business and is flourishing following the opening of Panorama in Valletta.

The most recent addition to the restaurant portfolio is MIRO, located within the George Hotel in Paceville and inspired by the Spanish artist's Joan Miró eclectic, experiential style.

"MIRO can be described as an elegant brasserie, with a wide range of meat dishes but also a selection of seafood, all selected over the display



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Not many companies
in Malta can ensure
such business
continuity

ALEX TRANTER

counter. The cooking is done in an expensive, charcoal-operated Josper oven, which imparts a very particular taste, retaining all the juiciness of the cut.

"We've tried to be as innovative as possible by offering a new food concept in the jungle of offerings that is Paceville. Hopefully, like when watching a movie, patrons can forget for a little while that they are in the heart of Paceville and be immersed in a different environment."

Given that the catering industry is such a highly volatile one, how does CaterEssence retain its competitive edge?

Alex believes this is firmly embedded in the four elements of talent, quality, innovation and trust.

"It is not easy to be able to fight within such an overcrowded environment but I do believe that if you choose the right people, have the right concept and the right location, then it's a matter of persistence and of maintaining the promise." ■



A passion to learn drives the Group's vision

After 17 years with the Group, the spark is still there for finance director Stephen Borg, who believes he learns something new every day, as the companies continue to grow and diversify.

As he is also the Group's company secretary, he sits in for some 10 to 15 board meetings a month, but one of his favourite meetings is that of the strategy board, where all directors, including non-executive ones, come together to brainstorm ideas and discuss a way forward for the Group.

He describes it as an "equal opportunity board", which belongs to everyone. Stephen believes that this board nurtures a sense of belonging among his colleagues.

An exciting idea that was born out of one such board meeting is the creation of a five-year vision, and he is looking forward to renew this plan for the upcoming years.

"We recently set a 2020 vision with specific targets relating to turnover, net assets and increased profitability, which I'm proud to report are very much on track.

"Two of these three targets should be achieved by the end of this year, so now we set about thinking of rolling forward this five-year strategy."

Another ongoing exciting venture for Stephen is the implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. After months of laying the groundwork for the new software, the system went live this year within the construction division of the Group.

This was quite a feat and took a lot of preparation because different software companies had to be consulted to identify the ideal product for the Group.

"We used to work with what was purely an accounting package, and like



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The minute I stop learning would be the beginning of the end of the challenge

STEPHEN BORG





all other systems we grew out of it. This new software is a building block and in the near future we will integrate payroll, human resources and the commercial departments within the same system, something that our previous software did not cater for," Stephen says.

"We're doing well with it so far. Implementing the new system involved retraining the personnel, but I think we're already reaping some benefits."

The new system will allow for better speed of execution, providing his team with a greater capability to deliver information quicker and in a

more structured manner. The quality of the reports issued with each query – in terms of layout and reliability – should also improve.

The system will now starting being implemented within the catering and property divisions and later on within the care section.

All in all it has been another important year for the Group.

"We recently celebrated Nazzareno Vassallo's 50th anniversary as Chairman of the Group. I've been here for much less – 17 years – so I have only walked a small part of this journey with him. It's been a pleasure because I've learnt something new every day.

"I had once told Mr Vassallo that the minute I stop learning would be the beginning of the end of the challenge."

As the companies grow and the Group continues to diversify, Stephen believes there is always something new to learn. "The spark is still there," he adds. ■



THE GOLDEN AGE

Vassallo Group has been in celebratory mood this year as it marked the 50th anniversary of Nazzareno Vassallo at the helm.

Companies within the Group organised various events to mark the occasion, ranging from business breakfasts hosted by CareMalta and CaterEssence, and brunches and lunches and dinners put on by Vassallo Builders and Vassallo Group Realty, to a concert at the San Martin Estate and reception hosted by the Chairman.

It was on October 16, 1967, that Mr Vassallo became chairman of the company, back then solely a construction business, and under his stewardship it has grown into the multifaceted Group it has become today.

Hearty congratulations to the chairman!





Valuing employees



Heading human resources is tough in any set-up, but it presents an even stiffer challenge when an organisation operates in several different sectors and has over 1,700 employees.

When Charlo Bonnici was appointed as an HR Manager in 2008, he dealt with just one company within Vassallo Group: its senior citizen residence arm, CareMalta. Over the past 18 months, however, he has assumed responsibility for the entire portfolio.

“Before my current post was created, one company didn’t really know what the other was doing on a human resources level. That has changed. Today we talk to each other through formal and informal meetings which present us with an opportunity to discuss issues and come up with solutions,” Charlo says.

The Group is committed to the development of its staff, and has introduced a programme specifically aimed at valuing individual performance, known as VIP, as well as

moving towards a system of continuous appraisal.

“We interact with employees of different ages in a variety of roles – from a construction worker to an executive – so we cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. However, we operate an open-door policy across the board and fully recognise that in this day and age, constant feedback is a vital component of management.”

On the chairman’s initiative, the Group has also introduced two employee incentive programmes.

The Retirement Bonus Scheme enables staff who reach pensionable age to receive a lump sum calculated on the basis of one week’s salary for every year they have been with the company – and if they remain in employment they also receive an additional week’s pay per annum.

The Group also shares a portion of its profits with employees who have been with the company for three or more years. This amount is also



We operate an open-door policy and fully recognise that constant feedback is a vital component of management

CHARLO BONNICI



calculated on the basis of tenure and this year alone 600 members of staff were able to benefit.

“It is important to offer incentives to attract new employees and of course retain them. We have also introduced a range of family-friendly measures as the demands and benefits of flexibility become more prominent.”

Charlo admits that finding Maltese workers is more difficult than in the past, partly due to a booming economy and higher education standards, but points to the Group’s reputation as a good employer as a pulling factor, as well as its willingness to recruit foreign nationals.

“Today, one-third of our workforce is made up of foreigners – some of whom have been with us for more than 20 years.

“Since they come from over 50 countries, it can present a challenge to ensure that everyone integrates – but we have fully embraced cultural

diversity and devised structures to ensure employees communicate effectively and feel part of the set-up.”

Feeling part of the company is very much what the Group is about, and it applies a caring philosophy not just to guests but also to staff members in need.

It has an Employee Assistance Programme, which is extended to staff members’ immediate families, and its Arkati Foundation also provides financial assistance where needed.

“Having healthy and happy employees is important to us,” Charlo says, “and it also benefits our clients.” ■





A nose for procurement ensures Group's smooth running

In his initial years with Vassallo Group, it used to take Eusebio Muscat days to sift through hundreds of pages to find prospective product suppliers.

Nowadays, it just takes one swipe on his phone.

Eusebio joined the Group as a Stock Controller 21 year ago, and has since moved his way up to Group Purchasing Manager.

"When I initially started working for the Group, I had already set my eyes on foreign suppliers, because I could see great potential in establishing a relationship with key players due to the demands of the Group."

But of course, technology and the internet were not as accessible as they are nowadays.

"I remember that when I was carrying out research about tower cranes nearly 20 years ago, we had gone to the Malta Development Corporation and asked for details of suppliers.

"We were provided with a list of all crane suppliers based abroad... we were handed stacks of hundreds of pages, the equivalent of two or three telephone directories piled on top of each other."

The list included all suppliers linked to the keyword 'crane', meaning that

Eusebio had to go through the details of those supplying anything from hoists used in elderly homes to tower cranes.

Research methodology to choose prospective suppliers is the largest change he has experienced over the past two decades, but communication with his clients or suppliers has also made huge strides.

Eusebio has gone from receiving some information about the requested item and its function, illustrated by a blurry photo that is faxed to his office, to an image sent through WhatsApp.

And when it comes to ordering an item from a supplier, you can just send



them a photo and receive an immediate reply he explains.

Purchasing has always been demanding, but the role is becoming more so as the Group continues to expand.

From its inception, his department has moved away from the traditional purchasing role and headed towards the broader concept of procurement. This approach is based more on understanding the fundamental requirements, carrying research to identify products and/or suggesting alternatives, and evaluating potential providers and negotiation of contracts.

Through it all, teamwork remains an essential ingredient.

His team takes care of procuring anything the Group needs from building products, to medical equipment and food ingredients. The responsibilities include managing the Group's stores and taking care of its insurance portfolio.

Over the past months, his team has been involved in the refurbishment of



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There is a lot of hard work involved, but there is a high level of teamwork

EUSEBIO MUSCAT

the Riviera Hotel and Spa in Marfa and Villa Messina, and has also worked on HILA's Casa Apap Bologna, Dar Bjorn, the opening of three 'The Cake Box' outlets, as well as the inauguration of the MIRO Restaurant in Paceville.

"There is a lot of hard work involved, but there is a high level of teamwork and dedication among my small team.

"We invest a lot of time in relations among the team members. Demands are high and we form a crucial part of the supply chain. If we don't act fast and efficiently, the supply chain comes to a halt leading to undesirable consequences," he says, noting that the team goes through continuous training.

How does he manage to deal with today's ever-increasing stress?

"Part of dealing with stress is to get involved in events unrelated to your work. I think you need to find a balance between your private and work life. Once you find a balance, you become more productive and creative, and in turn less stressed." ■

Realising dreams through strategy



Joe Saliba may have bowed out of politics but developing strategy remains at the core of what he does to this day as he focuses his sight on exploring new investment potential for Vassallo Group.

Unshackled from the restrictive political arena, Joe relishes the freedom to explore fresh business ventures and teaming up with budding entrepreneurs to expand the Group's reach.

"The beauty of this strategy group is the freedom to dream and to venture into new pastures," he says.

This ability to dream is what fires him

up and he speaks animatedly about how crucial it is for the Group to keep diversifying its portfolio to adapt to the fast-changing economic scenario.

"We are constantly planning and seeking out new businesses with exciting commercial operations," Joe says.

The strategy group, which Joe chairs and which meets once a month, prepares, among others, all the business plans and targets of all its companies. Every sector has a rolling five-year plan, which is then analysed by the strategy team to determine if the targets are being reached, and where needed to help develop a strategy to make those targets a reality.

"The biggest satisfaction is that for a number of years we have been surpassing our targets. Which in a way also makes me wonder if we're stretching ourselves enough and whether we should be setting more ambitious targets," he ponders.



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The beauty of this strategy group is the freedom to dream and to venture into new pastures

JOE SALIBA





Looking back on one of the achievements of 2017, Joe is quick to refer to the sale of the Group's shares in the software company 6PM, which was bought by Idox Health earlier in the year.

The Group, which is in the enviable position of having the foresight and the experience of what could become a successful investment, had bought the shares five years ago and has now made a substantial return on the sale.

Turning his sight to 2018, Joe says the focus for the Group is to enter into two joint ventures with companies operating in the teeming sectors of IT and gaming. Careful not to reveal too much, he says the ventures should be up and running by the first quarter of the year.

Another thing Joe is looking forward to with a lot of enthusiasm is the new university residence on campus. This public-private partnership with the University of Malta is the largest single-project investment in the Group's 71-year history.

The €25 million project is still awaiting permits, but Joe is hopeful these will be in hand for the work to start by mid-2018. The project – which is intended to function like a small village, complete with residential, commercial and sports facilities – will be split over three phases and in its final design be able to accommodate 800 students.

Having an affinity with the University of Malta, Joe is particularly enthused to see the project get off the ground. He is also looking at the potential of sparking greater collaboration with the university by entering into the sphere of education and teaching English to foreign students.

"I'm looking ahead with enthusiasm for 2018 – there are plenty of existing projects in store." ■

The Arkati Foundation

Financial Statements

30 November 2016

Income and Expenditure Account

Year ended 30 November 2016

	Note	2016 €	2015 €
Revenue			
Investment gains		10,767	10,361
Donations		31,633	22,729
Fees and charges		(18)	(14)
Tax at source		(1,425)	(1,361)
		40,957	31,715
Less loss on redemption of financial assets (931)			
Excess of income over expenditure		40,026	31,715
Allocated to:			
Accumulated funds		20,013	15,858
Distributable fund 2015/16	4	20,013	15,857
		40,026	31,715

Statement of Affairs

30 November 2016

	Note	2016 €	2015 €
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES			
Non-current assets			
Held-to-maturity investments	5	228,032	221,732
Current assets			
Other receivables		2,097	2,233
Cash and cash equivalents	6	46,142	17,976
		48,239	20,209
Total assets		276,271	241,941
Current liabilities			
Distributable income		33,294	26,561
Net assets		242,977	215,380
Represented by:-			
Capital Fund	7	11,647	11,647
Distributable fund	4	33,294	26,561
Accumulated fund	8	198,036	177,172
		242,977	215,380

These financial statements were approved by the board members, authorised for issue on 25 April 2017 and signed on its behalf by:

President

Member



‘We are foreigners, but we never felt like foreigners’

When Anto Manuel was first encouraged by a friend to leave India and apply for a job with CareMalta, he had never heard of the island before.

“My father did say that Malta is mentioned in the Bible, so this was a good sign,” he grins.

So Anto, a nurse by profession, packed his bags and joined CareMalta seven years ago. At the time, there were only around another three Indian employees, all from his home state of Kerala in the south of India.

“In the beginning, we were all a bit anxious and tense to be in a new country with a new culture and new traditions. The rest of the employees were all Maltese who, at the time, hadn’t worked much with foreigners either.

“However, they were incredibly supportive and encouraging. Within a

few weeks, I had adapted to Maltese culture and it felt like home. We were treated very equally.”

Bearing testament to this, Anto explains, was his manager’s decision to believe in him and in his skills to send him on a management course after just one year of employment.

Anto is now assistant facility manager at Casa San Paolo in Bugibba, overseeing some 210 elderly residents. And as CareMalta grew, so did the number of Indian nationals employed across the company.

“There are now 140 Indian employees within CareMalta, all from Kerala. And although we had the opportunity to learn all about Maltese culture, the Maltese knew little about ours.”



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If you work hard, you can achieve anything in CareMalta

ANTO MANUEL



So three years ago, the idea was born to organise the Onam festival in Malta. The biggest and most important festival of the state of Kerala, Onam is a traditional day 10-day harvest festival that marks the homecoming of the mythical King Mahabali.

The festival, organised by Indian CareMalta employees, started off as a small affair but grew in scale, with this summer's edition being the largest yet. Among those invited were CareMalta employees, Vassallo Group shareholders and the Prime Minister's wife, Michelle Muscat, and their two children.

Anto beams as he goes through a video clip with the highlights of the event on his phone. It makes for a vibrant and colourful spectacle, featuring intricately-designed flower mats called *pookalam*, an elaborate set of dishes called *sadhya* traditionally served on banana leaves (but replaced by a disposable substitute because they couldn't find banana leaves in Malta), and employees performing folk dances clad in their traditional garb.

"At least we showed our Maltese colleagues a glimpse of our culture and it was also an opportunity to show our gratitude. We are foreigners, but we never felt like foreigners here.

"If you work hard, you can achieve anything in CareMalta – because you are respected and have the chance to deliver." 🍌



Archbishop visits Roseville

A Mother's Day event was held at Roseville where Archbishop Charles Scicluna celebrated Mass and spoke with the residents.



245 students graduate from CareMalta Academy

CareMalta Academy celebrated five graduation ceremonies during 2017. A total of 245 students attended City & Guilds courses for IVQ Diploma in Healthcare and IVQ Specialist Diploma in Healthcare and were presented with their certificates. The graduations were held at the Training and Development Centre, Landmark Qormi, and certificates were presented by CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia and Academy Principal Charlo Bonnici. To date CareMalta Academy has held graduations for 25 classes, totalling 878 successful candidates.



Thanksgiving Mass

A thanksgiving Mass and reception was held in September at Casa San Paolo with special thanks to all the staff and volunteers who gave their support when a fire broke out at the home last summer.





The role of the family in elderly care

The Role of the Family in Elderly Care was the topic of the second edition of the CareMalta Academy Forum organised by CareMalta, a leading company in healthcare.

CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia spoke about the company's involvement in the formal care sector over the past 25 years and how the family's continued presence in the life of the elderly was crucial to the older person's well-being.

Keynote speaker Godwin Mifsud, Director General from the Economic Policy Department, delved into the economic insight on informal care in Malta. He discussed statistics of population trends, demographics and life expectancy among other data.

Guest speaker Maria Camilleri, Social Worker CommCare Assessment Unit, spoke about the services provided by the State to the elderly living in the community.

The Prime Minister's wife, Michelle Muscat, who was the special guest, attended this event and shared her own personal experience as an informal carer for her parents.

Social Solidarity Minister Michael Farrugia closed the forum by stressing the importance of community services to prolong the stay of elderly people in their own home.

The CareMalta Academy is CareMalta's educational arm and has been responsible for the training of around 1,000 care workers since it was set up in 2010.



Group Chairman visits CareMalta

Vassallo Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo personally delivered to residents at all CareMalta's homes a traditional *figolla* during Easter time and a gift at Christmas.



Verona Marathon

Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo and his sister Natalie Briffa Farrugia, CEO of CareMalta, successfully completed the full 42km marathon in Verona in November.

New partnership leads to more services for children with developmental disorders

World Autism Day was this year marked with an important partnership between CareMalta Group and Hand in Hand Malta that led to the creation of new company specialising in services for persons with developmental disorders – Hand in Hand Ltd.

This partnership brings together two entities that have established themselves in their respective fields.

Through the recently-formed partnership, Hand in Hand Ltd will be providing a wide range of services according to the needs of the child, ranging from psychological assessments,



evidence-based intervention (ABA), occupational therapy and speech therapy services. HILA, which operates Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta, now also home to Hand in Hand Ltd, will soon be inaugurating its second home in the community.

Present for the launch were Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia,

HILA Executive Director Janet Silvio, and Jacqueline Abela DeGiovanni, who has now been appointed CEO of Hand in Hand Ltd.

Education Minister visits summer school for children with autism

Education Minister Evarist Bartolo and Parliamentary Secretary Clifton Grima visited the summer school for children with autism spectrum disorder run by Hand in Hand Ltd at Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta. Hand in Hand, a partnership between Hand in Hand Malta and CareMalta Group, offers therapy for children diagnosed with autism. Services include teaching verbal behaviour, social skills, independent living skills and problem behaviour reduction.

Children receive full- or part-time intervention, which includes the services of speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. The team of highly qualified professionals is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families. Hand in Hand offers parent training, full- or part-time intervention, school consultation, and IEP development and support. All therapy plans are overseen by a fully qualified behaviour analyst who has obtained her qualifications from the Queen's University in Belfast.



Earlier this year, Hand in Hand Malta CEO Jacqueline Abela DeGiovanni, CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia, Vassallo Group Director Christian Vassallo and HILA Executive Director Janet Silvio visited ABA schools in Ireland to look into ways of offering more intensive Applied Behaviour Analysis therapy in Malta.

Following this visit, Hand in Hand started offering intensive ABA sessions where children received 20 hours of this therapy per week.



Dar Bjorn – a dream come true

Dar Bjorn – which will host 13 people suffering from ALS, an aggressive disease that attacks the nervous system, MS and neuro patients – opened its doors on November 1, bringing to fruition the dream of long-time sufferer Bjorn Formosa. The building, which comprises 11 bedrooms and is fully accessible to sufferers, has been fully renovated at a cost of €4 million. The home was officially opened by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat in the presence of Archbishop Charles Scicluna and Parliamentary Secretary for People with a Disability and Active Ageing, Anthony Agius Decelis. The event kicked off with a performance by Tribali, followed by singers Christabelle and Brooke. In an emotional speech, Bjorn expressed his satisfaction to be opening this home and thanked everyone who had made it possible – while continuing to encourage the public to support Dar Bjorn with donations. HILA, part of Vassallo Group, will be responsible for the management and operation of Dar Bjorn.

‘Jien Nista’ - empowering people with disabilities

Vassallo Group is behind a radio programme aimed at knocking down barriers on disability. Entitled *Jien Nista*, the programme is presented on Radju Malta every Saturday over 13 weeks by Janet Silvio between 6.45 and 8pm.

The programme focuses on different experiences encountered by people with disabilities and highlights the challenges, success stories and disappointments people with disabilities face on a daily basis. As well as offering support to people with disabilities through the sharing of real-life experiences, the radio discussions help raise awareness about various issues that need to be addressed to ensure everyone can play a full role in society.



Although the content of the programme varies from week to week, what never fails to come across is the determination of people with disabilities to make their way forward in society. The programme is produced by Charlo Bonnici and Maria Christine Pillow.



The Cake Box opens three new outlets

Following the success of the first two outlets, ‘The Cake Box’ has opened three new outlets during this year alone.

The third outlet to be launched is located opposite The George Hotel in Paceville. This outlet also offers a wide choice of food as breakfast, lunch and dinner are also served. The Paceville outlet also acts as a pick up point for various cakes produced by CaterEssence.

The Fourth outlet, located in the heart of Sliema’s shopping hub opened its doors in May right in the centre of St. Anne’s Square. One can expect a selection of cakes by the slice, muffins and pastries along with many healthy savoury items from ‘fresh eats’ such as yoghurts, fruit salads, wraps, sandwiches, sushi and more.

The Cake Box can now be found at the Park Towers Supermarket in St Julian’s, operating the bakery section of this popular new gourmet supermarket. Apart from serving a wide range of bread choices, The Cake Box also offers its full range of pastries as well as a ‘fresh eats’ range of healthy grab-and-go snacks.

The Cake Box brand is owned by CaterEssence Ltd, the food division of Vassallo Group.

MIRO – an innovative and exciting dining experience

CaterEssence has opened a new gastro concept at The George Hotel in Paceville – MIRO – featuring innovative and exciting dishes by head chef Carlos Buttigieg. MIRO follows on from the success of the Panorama restaurant at the British Hotel in Valletta and brings an entirely new dining experience to the scene.

www.miro.com.mt



Phoenicia milestone

Initial works for the Phoenicia Hotel's refurbishment started back in November 2015 when excavation was carried out under the supervision of Heritage Malta to preserve buried remains of historic walls. Following extensive works, the hotel opened its doors in April 2017. The renovation of the spa area started in June 2017 and a topping up ceremony took place in October. Vassallo Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, Group CEO Pio Vassallo, Vassallo Builders Deputy CEO Jonathan Buttigieg, management and staff were present to commemorate this project's milestone.



Vassallo Builders' fleet switches to electric

Vassallo Builders has once again set standards for the local building and construction industry with the acquisition of four new electric Nissan Leaf vehicles.

In line with its green strategy and environmental values, Vassallo Builders opted to scrap four vehicles from its older fleet and replace these with new 30KW Nissan Leaf – the latest model from Nissan in a history that spans decades of research and development in the field.

Through this initiative, the powerful 30kWh battery pack will eliminate close to 14 metric tons of CO2

emissions per year and allow users to drive for up to 170Km on a single charge. Furthermore, the Group will complement this investment with the installation of a state-of-the-art electric charging station at its Mosta Head Offices allowing all four vehicles to be plugged in and charged at the same time.

During a key-handing over ceremony, in the presence of Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo and CEO Pio Vassallo, Nissan Malta General Manager Jean Claude Spiteri Miggiani congratulated Vassallo Builders for this investment and praised the initiative.



Quantum leap

An important milestone is marked as Vassallo Builders celebrates a topping up ceremony – *L-Aħħar Bajla Konkos* – at Quantum Place in Gżira, a project that started in February 2016.

Seminar focuses on performance

The annual Vassallo Builders seminar, held in December and titled Creating a High Performance Culture, was addressed by the company's Chairman, CEO and deputy CEO, followed by a special presentation by motivational speaker Nathan Farrugia.

Staff members with different responsibilities, from managers to supervisors and from receptionists to cleaners, took part in the session, which included practical team exercises. During the seminar, the company's top management shared the company's financial results for last year as well as its vision for the coming years. In addition, an original, employee-centred presentation was delivered by Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo.



Riviera's renovation

A topping up ceremony was held at the Riviera Hotel & Spa in Marfa to commemorate the end of a seven-month journey to refurbish the hotel.

Vassallo Builders stripped the hotel to its shell form to renovate all rooms and bathrooms and carried out excavation works for additional areas. The old reception area was transformed to create a new Panorama bar while the new reception moved one floor down. Excavation works for a new pool and reservoirs also took place.

A new fifth floor was added while the front area was extended to create a number of new sea view rooms and existing ones to overlook the pool area. Vassallo Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, API Director Beppe Bugeja and various management and staff were present at this event.



Vassallo Group celebrates International Women's Day

Vassallo Group has kept a long-standing tradition of marking International Women's Day by treating more than 100 women – directors, managers and employees from across the Group – to a special lunch.

CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia delivered a strong message about women's rights and equality, which have come a long way in only a few decades. She shared her journey through the tough challenge she undertook to complete the Malta Full Marathon to support persons with disability, while putting into practice HILA's *Believe Achieve* motto.

She also announced a CareMalta campaign to enrol 25 individuals who were prepared to run the 2018 half-marathon to mark CareMalta's 25th anniversary.

Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo said he was delighted that 60 per cent of employees and 33 per cent of

the Group's directors were women. He added that women were involved in every level within the Group's management structures, including shareholders and directors, managers, assistant managers and supervisors.

Held on March 8 at the Malta Chamber of Commerce, this year's event invited Social Dialogue Minister Helena Dalli and National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) Commissioner Renee Laiviera, as special guests.

Dr Dalli congratulated Mrs Briffa Farrugia for her determination in completing such a challenge and said she was a great inspiration to all, including herself. She also spoke about Vassallo Group's promotion of women's rights to equality. Dr Dalli also applauded the Group for its understanding and support of a greater balance between work and family life, and for achieving the Equality Mark throughout 2016.

Vassallo Group's history celebrated in new publication

Vassallo Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo presented President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca with a copy of the book *Vision – Valuing the Past, Building the Future*, which marked the Group's 70th anniversary.

The book, produced and published by Kite, traces the Group's 70-year history from the Vassallo family's humble beginnings in Għajnsielem and the clearing of World War II debris by Mr Vassallo's father, Pio, to the present day's milestones.

The story of the Group runs parallel with a detailed account of the political, social and economic changes in Malta throughout this period.

Penned by Mr Vassallo with Joe Cassar as editor, *Vision* goes into the detail of each sector the Group has been



operating, mainly construction, care for the elderly, catering and hospitality and property management.

The contribution of Mr Vassallo's children to each of these sectors is also highlighted in the publication.



Chairman's Lunch

The annual Chairman's Lunch organised by Vassallo Group was held at the Casino Maltese.

Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo hosted this special annual event, which marked the Group's 70th anniversary, and had as its guests of honour Finance Minister Edward Scicluna and University Rector Professor Alfred Vella.

During his speech Mr Vassallo spoke about the Group's accomplishments and milestones, culminating with the launch of the Group's publication *Vision*, a hardback book commemorating the Group's journey from 1946 to date.

Some 150 guests, including employees from the various companies within Vassallo Group and major stakeholders, attended this grand event and were later presented with a copy of *Vision*, as well as the company's yearly publication of the *Arkati* magazine.

Ethical values in business discussed during corporate seminar

'Our Group's Business Ethical Values: Do they concern me?' was the topic of this year's corporate seminar. Director Chris Vassallo opened the seminar with a presentation discussing the Group's ethics in business and how the company's core values of excellence, integrity, respect, and innovation' were always a top priority. Guest speaker Fr Joe Borg, a university lecturer, then delivered a talk on work ethics and opened up the floor to a discussion where the management could share their opinions and perspective on the topic.



Shine Awards spark launch of two new schemes

It was a glitzy evening where everything sparkled, but what shone brightest were the employees of Vassallo Group who were recognised for their overall performance and level of excellence in their area of operation.

Vassallo Group, which prides itself on its multicultural team, this year included an award for Diversity and Inclusion during the Shine Awards held at Sir Temi Zammit Hall, University of Malta.

The awards acknowledged employees for the best customer focus, green initiatives, and project and service quality. Other awards were presented for efforts related to health and safety, training and development, as well as for best employee, best supervisor and best manager.

Touching on the Group's main achievements of the past year, Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo used the occasion to announce two new schemes for employees: a pension bonus for those who reach pensionable age after years of service with the Group; as well as a loyalty reward scheme where employees get to share in the Group's success in a tangible way.

Compered by TV personality Ben Camille, the evening ended on a high note with the announcement of the



coveted Chairman's Awards, which this year recognised all those who were involved in the safe evacuation of all elderly residents at Casa San Paolo in Bugibba when a fire broke out in the home's laundry room.

The event included the participation of Janice Mangion, who placed second in this year's Malta Eurovision Song Contest, and dancers from the group Street Elements.

A number of Indian nurses working in different CareMalta homes also staged a performance in typical Indian costumes highlighting the Group's belief in promoting cultural diversity.

The Shine Awards 2017 came to an end with a reception catered for by Vassallo Group's CaterEssence.





3RS PHILOSOPHY AWARD
JOE BORG



BEST ARKATI AMBASSADOR AWARD
CHRISTIAN MICALLEF



BEST EMPLOYEE AWARD
JAMES CASSAR



BEST KEPT CAR AWARD
TONY GAUCI



BEST MANAGER AWARD
ROBERT GRECH



BEST SUPERVISOR AWARD
LISA BUGEJA



CHAIRMAN'S AWARD
THE CASA SAN PAOLO TEAM



CUSTOMER FOCUS AWARD - OPEN CATEGORY
CARLO & IT TEAM



CUSTOMER FOCUS IN CARE AWARD
JITHIN PRASANTH



CUSTOMER FOCUS IN CATERING AWARD
STEPHANIE OELKER



DEBTORS COLLECTORS AWARD - OPERATIONAL
CHRIS GAUCI



**DEBTORS COLLECTORS
AWARD - RENTAL**
SILVANA BORG



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARD
EVLIN DIMITROV, MILAN JOVANOVIC (ABOVE LEFT),
SASHA ILJUMOBOVIC (ABOVE RIGHT), STEVAN DZAMBIC



SAFETY AWARD
SIMON CUSCHIERI



GREEN INITIATIVES AWARD
EUSEBIO MUSCAT AND GEORGE AZZOPARDI



**SERVICE QUALITY AWARD
OPEN CATEGORY**
JENNIFER VELLA AND CHRISTINE VALENTE



**SERVICE QUALITY IN
CARE AWARD**
ANJU GEORGE



**SERVICE QUALITY IN
CATERING AWARD**
MARTIN CAUCHI



**SERVICE QUALITY IN
CONSTRUCTION AWARD**
ALEX BORG



SMART APPEARANCE AWARD
TANYA MANGION



**SUCCESSFUL PROJECT
AWARD**
LIDL MOSTA TEAM



**TRAINING AND
DEVELOPMENT AWARD**
KATIE DRURY

Vassallo Builders



**5 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

Charlene Vella Vassallo
Carmel Chircop
Tonio Depasquale
Edison Scicluna

**10 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

Jesmond Bugeja
Elisa Camilleri
Uros Eror
Anthony Joseph Galea
Salvatore Lauron
Ivica Macranovic
Emil Vassile Marinov
Alexander Vukovic



**15 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

John Farrugia



**25 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

Carmel Bartolo
Anthony Mifsud



**30 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

Joseph Sammut



CareMalta



**5 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

Rita Grima
Jinu James
Doris Lautier
Elizabeth Lotus Webber
John Mamo
Tania Mangion
Anto Manuel
Josianne Micallef
Maria Doloës Doreen
Micallef
Doreen Mifsud
Olivera Mistic
Joseph Portelli
Carmen Portelli
Kristianne Russello
Julie AKA Angela Sammut
Emmanuel Sammut
Dorianne Scerri
Michael Scerri
Lucy Scerri
Mary Louise Scicluna
Romina Scicluna
Romina Spiteri
Vladimir Sucurovic
Roseanne Triganza
Christine Varrazzo
Audrey Vassallo
Marion Vella
Jennifer Vella
Adriana Vlad
Renata Zahra
Michela Zammit
Angelica Zammit
Lorenza Zerafa

Jane Agius
Mary Grace Aguis
Josette Aguis
Abigail Azzopardi
Antoinette Bonnici
Matthias Borg
George Douglas Borg
Marthese Busutill
Marthese Buttigieg
Natasha Camenzuli
Anna Camilleri
Carl Caruana
Amy Chetcuti
Charmaine Chircop
Helen Cortis
Cleven Curmi
Mary Cutajar
Mary Debattista
Rita Debono
Helen Dordevic
Josefa Farrugia
Rachelle Fenech
Charles Galea
Mariella Gaudi
Lara Grech
Vicky Grech
Edmond Grech
Philip Grima

CaterEssence



**5
YEARS
OF
SERVICE**

NEW RECRUITS, APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS



10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Paul Aguis
Priscilla Azzopardi
Kenneth Bezzina
Graziella Bongailas
Michelle Borg
Natalie Briffa Farrugia
Marvic Busuttil
Marisa Caruana
Catherine Caruana
Lucienne Cassar
Lina Farrugia
Maria Fenech
Josephine Schembri
Rita Young



15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Rita Abela
Sandra Camilleri
Mary Grima
Marisa Mallan
Miriam Mifsud
Teresita Mifsud
Rita Muscat
Jane Schembri



20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Pauline Azzopardi
Carmen Bonello
Carmen Galea
Rita Micallef
Mary Vella
Carmelo K/A Charles Vella



Lisa Bugeja
Richard Kwaah Asante
Christian Abdilla
Rita Saliba
Raymond Sultana

Amanda Jane Zammit
Werknesh Gunfasori
Daniel Glanville
Chernet Tassew

Vassallo Builders

Jackie Cordina Director - Vassallo Group Realty

Jenise Darmanin Assistant Financial Controller

CareMalta

Josette Grech Facility Manager - Bormla Home

Anita Grech Financial Controller

Janet Silvio Executive Director - HILA

James Sciriha Director of Finance

CaterEssence

Stephania Gauci Accounts Executive

Erwan Lesenne Assistant Restaurant Manager
(Hotels Division)

Massimo Borg Chef Team Lead (CPU Pastry)

Anthony Woodmore Dispatch & Logistics
Coordinator

Stuart Caruana Deputy General Manager
(Hotels Division)

Mario Mallia Executive Pastry Chef

Raphael Cauchi General Manager (Retail)

Carlos Buttigieg Head Chef (MIRO)

Adrian Bajada Head Chef (Hotels Division)

Wayne Bartolo Jr Sous Chef (CPU)

Gary Falzon Jr Sous Chef (Miro)

Yakinov Galdes Operations Manager
(The Cake Box)

Adriana Cortis Personal Assistant to the
Executive Chairman

Damian Peplow Restaurant Manager
(Hotels Division)

Ian Fenech Restaurant Manager (MIRO)

Michael Zerafa Corporate Head Chef
(Hotels Division)

Marvin Schembri Restaurateur

Mattei Curmi Assistant Outlet Manager
(The Cake Box)

Kevin Debattista General Manager (Operations)

Karen Dingli Sr HR Executive

Natalie Cauchi Payroll Executive



CareMalta Apex Training Programme

CareMalta has embarked on an Apex training programme delivered by Think Talent, which aims to enhance management skills while improving and developing leadership qualities. Facility Managers, Assistant Facility Managers and Head Office staff have attended the training sessions.

Villa Messina Coming Home

A 'Coming Home' seminar was held at the newly refurbished Villa Messina as part of a training and development programme aimed at strengthening the team and making members feel at home. Think Talent was entrusted with the programme which set out to rekindle team spirit and make participants more aware of the service values that inspire CareMalta in its mission in this field. Various team-building tasks and games were organised for a number of groups to encourage teamwork, inclusion, interaction and participation. CareMalta's CEO Mrs Natalie Briffa Farrugia said: "Coming Home is an opportunity for a fresh start... and also an opportunity to grow, change whatever was not working so well, and to strengthen the team that will be working here." CareMalta operates eight homes, takes care of over 1,400 residents and employs over a 1,000 staff.



CareMalta Annual Management Team Building



The annual team building event for CareMalta's Management team was held over two days at Xrobb L-Ghagin hostel, focusing on service promise development and formulation.

Team Building Event

CareMalta held a team-building event for Management and heads of department hosted by Outdoor living at the Basketball premises in Ta Qali where 10 teams took part in various games and activities.



Onam Festival 2017

Onam Festival – A harvest festival celebrated in the Indian state of Kerala known as the Onam Festival – was organised by CareMalta's Indian employees for Management and staff.





In someone else's shoes for a day

CareMalta held a role change day event whereby management took on different roles within the company to experience and appreciate everyone's position while also understanding the importance of every individual's contribution. CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia said: "Role change day at Caremalta is one of the best days in our calendar of events. It is an opportunity for us as a management team to gain hands-on experience of different roles and gives us the chance to be with the people, feel their emotions, carry a part of their burden and treasure the moments."



CareMalta staff party

The CareMalta Summer Staff Party was held at Amazonia Beach Club on August 3.



Building on staff development

Vassallo Builders has embarked on an intensive staff development programme aimed at the development of staff as individuals and within a team environment.

A number of the company's managers followed a year-long programme called APEX, a leadership development programme covering leadership, business and management development. The company was set up more than 70 years ago and is considered today as one of Malta's leading construction companies.



Team building at the beach

A Vassallo Builders teambuilding event was held at Ghajn Tuffieħa Camp in collaboration with St Aloysius College Scout Group. Staff were divided into four teams and took part in various challenges that had to be completed within set timeframes. All the sessions involved teamwork, from scavenger hunts to building bridges, cooking and other activities. The event turned out to be a great success with all participants enjoying a fun-filled afternoon.



Vassallo Builders goes to Sicily

Over 70 personnel from Vassallo Builders – including senior management, management and staff – headed to Sicily in September for a summer event with a difference. The day began with a visit to Mount Etna where a lunch was also organised followed by a visit to the stunning Gola Alcantara and an afternoon in the historic setting of Taormina.

Christmas Party 2016

Last year's annual Christmas Party was held at Casino Maltese, Valletta, on December 22. Entertainment was provided throughout by J Anvil and Amber, who were accompanied by a six-piece band. At the end of the evening a cake was cut by members of the Vassallo family.



New chill-out room at Head Office

A new chill-out room at The Three Arches in Mosta has just been inaugurated to provide employees with the space to relax and unwind during their break. Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo said it had been his longtime wish to see everyone socialising in the same area, while enjoying lunch with their colleagues. The chill-out area includes a TV, game console, soccer table as well as a spacious outdoor terrace.



Cultural Diversity Day

For the first time in the company's history Vassallo Group organised a Cultural Diversity Day to learn about the culture of its international employees who hail from over 50 countries. The event was a success and showed the employees' eagerness to understand the cultural backgrounds of their colleagues. It also served to ensure that a seamless method of operating continued, irrespective of an employee's background.



Vassallo Group supports Pink October

Vassallo Group celebrated Pink Day on October 12 by inviting all employees to wear pink clothing to support the Pink October campaign. Vassallo Builders, CareMalta and CaterEssence employees took part in this event by organising a Hot Dog Day, selling merchandise and donating a number of hours' pay to raise money for this cause.

Arkati Foundation Day

Arkati Foundation Day was held on February 17 to raise awareness about the work it does and the solidarity shown to its members through the combined efforts of employees and Vassallo Group. Chairman Joe Saliba and other board members spent a day visiting employees at various CareMalta homes, Vassallo Builders sites, CaterEssence Kitchens and The Cake Box.



Bring Your Child to Work Day

Vassallo Group employees took part in the 'Bring your Child to Work Day' during November's mid-term holidays. This event was a great opportunity for parents to introduce their children to their colleagues and for children to relate to their parents' workplace. The children were treated to a day of fun, including a treasure hunt that led them to a chest full of goody bags.



Football tournament in aid of Arkati Foundation

Twelve teams took part in a four-hour football tournament at the Attard FC football ground in aid of Arkati Foundation in September. The two teams who made it to the final were both from CaterEssence, with Georgi Pants winning the final match against the Finance department.

CSR day at St Francis de Paule Home

More than 60 employees from various companies within Vassallo Group rolled up their sleeves to help out in this year's corporate social responsibility event held at St Francis de Paule home for children in Birkirkara in October. Works involved dismantling furniture, construction, disposal of items and cleaning. The event was a success and the Group plans to continue helping the home.



CaterEssence Summer staff party

Around 100 employees attended the CaterEssence staff party held at the Rooftop of the Landmark on September 1.



CareMalta Academy invests in carers' future

Finding the right people with the proper training to employ in the care sector can sometimes be tough, so Vassallo Group decided to resolve this by setting up the CareMalta Academy.

Set up in 2015, the idea behind the Academy was to counter the dearth of workers in the field of those caring for the elderly and the disabled.

The courses are open to everybody who is interested in pursuing a career in the sector and provide students with the basic knowledge, skills and competences that would support them in dealing with the elderly or persons with disabilities.

Nearly 700 students have qualified with a Diploma in Health Care from the Academy after undergoing City & Guilds courses. The Academy recently also started offering courses leading to MCAST qualification in advanced healthcare and disability.

While most of them work with CareMalta, which today employs more than 1,000 persons, the Academy's graduates are also finding work within the public and private sectors.

CareMalta takes immense pride in being able to contribute to society by offering a pool of people trained in this important sector.

Arkati caught up with some students to hear what they have to say about their experience at the Academy:



CONNIE REYES, 33

I was a carer in the Philippines and I've been in Malta working with the elderly and the disabled for the past eight years.

I'm really enjoying the course at the Academy and I'm getting a lot of guidance on how I can deliver the best service to my clients.



DORIANNE MERCIECA, 43

I have been working with people with special needs for a few years but I've now moved to the new home, Dar Bjorn, for those suffering from ALS. I sat for the diploma because I wanted to do better in my job and earn a qualification in the process.

The course helped me learn how to better communicate with clients and their relatives.



MAR DELA CRUZ, 28

I started working as a carer when I came from the Philippines, but I wanted to push myself more, which is why I decided to follow a course at the Academy. I have had to adjust my time between work and

classes, but it's been worth it because I have learnt so much.



ADIEL MICALLEF, 25

I always loved this sector and I enjoy working with the elderly. I'm young and still learning, but the course is really guiding me on how to deal with older people who are more vulnerable; to sit down and listen when they're lonely and to be patient.



MARITES DELA CRUZ, 42

I started working as a carer when I came from the Philippines, but I wanted to push myself more, which is why I decided to follow a course at the Academy. I have had to adjust my time between work and

classes, but it's been worth it because I have learnt so much.

MIRO

EXPERIENTIAL EATING

An open letter to you who are seeking an exquisite, unforgettable experience in Malta.

From the desk of Carlos Buttigieg, Executive Head Chef MIRO Restaurant, St. Julians. December 2017.

Dear Traveller,

Malta will leave a lasting impression on your heart. And I am writing you this letter because, selfishly, I hope that during your stay with us, you will grant me and my team the privilege of being a part of those cherished memories.

My name is Carlos. I am the Executive Head Chef at MIRO, and part of the elite team assembled by visionary restaurateur Marvin Schembri.

Here's what you can expect from MIRO.

If you're a connoisseur of fine spirits, we have for you a dedicated Manhattan trolley stocked with a lovely selection of bourbons, vermouths and bitters. Our barman will customise the perfect Manhattan cocktail to suit your mood and palate. Or if you prefer, you can try one of our craft cocktails, featuring in-house crafted ingredients such as foies gras infused vodka.

Our wine boutique holds a carefully-curated selection of 148 labels. And to make sure you savour every drop, you'll find Reidel 001 glasses waiting on your table.

For starters, I recommend the beef tartare, freshly-ground at your table using a manually-operated meat grinder, and shaped by hand. We finish it off with a touch of truffle oil and a hint of seasoning, and serve it with sides of shallots, gherkins, capers and Edmond Fallot gourmet mustards. For a more "elaborate" taste, try the risotto, prepared in a 24-month-aged parmesan wheel for an incredibly rich and creamy taste.

Our mains change daily, depending on whatever takes my fancy at the meat market. I recommend the shared meat board, which comes with a split bone on the side, so that you can scoop up the marrow and use it as garnish.

Conclude with a shot of 20th Anniversary XO plantation rum, and a bite of homemade artisanal chocolate.

There's a lot more waiting for you at MIRO. When you're on holiday, you want every moment to be absolutely fantastic. That's why we've gone to such great lengths to make sure you have an unforgettable experience.

MIRO is open for lunch and dinner from Tuesday to Saturday, and for Sunday lunch. We've only got a limited number of covers, and they fill up very quickly, so I strongly recommend you take out your cell phone right now and take note of this number — 00356 2010 9240. When you get off your flight, find a quiet spot and give us a call to reserve your table. Or you can book via email on info@miro.com.mt.

I look forward to hosting you at MIRO. Have a safe flight and see you soon.



(at The George Urban Boutique Hotel)
Triq Paceville, St Julian's, STJ 3103, Malta
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