

# ARKATI

THE VASSALLO GROUP PUBLICATION **2019**



  
**VASSALLO GROUP**  
SINCE 1946







**TRADITION.  
INNOVATION.  
DIVERSITY.**

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 1,900 and investments in a large variety of key macro sectors mainly in:

- CONSTRUCTION • CARE • CATERING • PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
- BESPOKE FURNITURE • HOSPITALITY • ENERGY • EDUCATION

IN THIS ISSUE

# ARKATI

## DECEMBER 2019

- 4** Chairman's message – Nazzareno Vassallo
- 8** CEO's message – Pio Vassallo
- 10** Vassallo & Vassallo Family Reunion
- 12** Training hard in every aspect of life – Natalie Briffa Farrugia
- 14** Burgeoning business for Vassallo Builders – Jonathan Buttigieg
- 16** 'We are here for the long haul' – Ruben Vassallo
- 18** Roll on 2021 – Alex Tranter
- 20** The socially conscious entrepreneurs – Christian Vassallo
- 22** Breaking the stigmas – Janet Silvio
- 24** Learning is lifelong process – Charlo Bonnici
- 26** A system that pays off – Lee Xuereb
- 28** Life after clocking off
- 29** 2020 promises to be even stronger – Stephen Borg
- 30** Wise spending leads to happy employees – James Sciriha
- 31** Appointments & Promotions
- 32** Shine Awards
- 34** Service Awards
- 36** Company News
- 46** Love for Mosta runs deep in the Vassallo family
- 48** Care as a common language
- 50** The Arkati Foundation Financial Statements

## EDITORIAL

2019 was another busy year for us at Vassallo Group. This issue covers the work that has been carried out over the past 12 months within the Group as a whole and specifically by each of its main subsidiaries.

This year's edition of *Arkati* features interviews with both the chairman and CEO to shed light on the strategy and outlook of Vassallo Group for 2019 and the years to come.

Interviews with our team, who are steering the main companies, provide a detailed account of the successes and challenges in their respective areas of responsibility.

In this issue we feature the Group's contribution to Mosta, which hosts our Head Office, as well as other group properties, including Casa Arkati and Casa Apap Bologna.

We have also included an article on the introduction of a centralised payroll system for the Group, and dedicated space to CareMalta's I Care programme.

Rolled out in May 2018, this programme is leaving its mark on the company and its services to the benefit of our beloved clients – elderly residents and persons with disability.

We also feature the Group's special partnership and reunion with Dennis and Jesmond Vassallo within our fold, which has led to the creation of an innovative project which will be inaugurated next year – The Vassallo Business Park.

As always, we also cover the major events that took place over the year within the Group both at corporate and staff level.

As we head into 2020, we are excited to be venturing into a new area as HILA makes history in Malta with the opening of Casal Nuovo in Paola, which will host people with acute mental health conditions.

We hope you will enjoy this publication as much as we enjoyed producing it.

On behalf of the company I wish you and your families a most joyous Christmas and a great New Year.

**Charlo Bonnici**

Editor









# ‘My wish is to continue giving’

Vassallo Group chairman NAZZARENO VASSALLO talks about what drives him out of bed in the morning, a diversified workforce and hitting a peak in the construction industry.

Nazzareno Vassallo walks into Villa Amodeo in Mosta exuding an enterprising spirit to seize the day which is infectious.

Known as Zaren, the 68-year-old construction magnate, who went on to revolutionise the private care of the elderly and disabled, shows no sign of stopping.

And, the fact that 2019 saw Vassallo Group reach a record 1,900 employees, seems to fuel his urgent need to rush out of bed and resolve the day's issues.

“It’s a big headache having so many employees,” he says with a smile that transmits both a sense of pride in how the company has grown – thanks also to his children who inherited his contagion for work – and the challenges this poses.

“I feel responsible and it actually makes me reconsider retirement... Having seen the company grow from nothing, having so many employees is a huge responsibility – our workforce is an integral part of the Group’s growth.

“It presents big challenges to ensure there is enough work, while working to provide the opportunities for them to advance in their career.”

This diverts the conversation to foreign workers and whether he faces similar struggles as other businesses who complain that finding the right, qualified people to hire for the job is becoming increasingly difficult.

Human resources is the biggest hurdle for continued development and growth and Zaren believes the challenge is to find the right people, as economic activity continues to grow at every level.

“We have to understand that we cannot turn back the clock and Malta needs foreigners. We decided many years ago that if we wanted to expand we needed foreign workers. So we focused our energies on making them feel welcome, offered them the same benefits and treatment as the Maltese, and helped them integrate,” Zaren says.





***I grew up always wanting to do something different, preferring not to do what everyone else was doing***



“We cannot produce what the country needs just with our human resources.”

From Bulgarians, to Serbs, Philippines and Indians, they all manage to communicate despite the initial language barriers, and some are now naturalised Maltese having been on the island for more than 25 years.

As a company, Vassallo Group proudly wears its diversified workforce as a badge on its rolled-up sleeves and considers each one to be part of their bigger family.

The Group’s growth is also partly due to the fact that it is focusing on a number of key projects that involve completing the Lands End Hotel in Sliema, the Campus Hub at the University of Malta, and the Vassallo Business Park in Burmarrad.

Like any contractor in Malta, business is booming, but Zaren, who has been in the industry ever since he joined his father’s business as a 15-year-old boy, is cautious and ever vigilant of the hairline cracks that have started to appear in the construction industry’s facade.

“My sense is that Malta risks having an oversupply of commercial, residential and retail. In 2018 there was a crazy







rhythm... I think that as an island we're peaking and should be cautious."

Was this the normal ebb and flow of the industry or was the island rushing headlong into free fall?

"Every five years or so you have a shift downwards. However, in the last 15 years we have succeeded in skipping these dips, going on to witness a huge boost in the last six years.

"Some may not have the experience and vision necessary for this industry and everyone is trying to ride on this – it cannot last forever and my advice is that we need to be more cautious before entering into commitments."

If he had to adopt a helicopter view of where Vassallo Group is heading in 2020, Zaren stops to reflect: it can either make him wake up refreshed or give him many a sleepless night. But overall, he is happy that he had the foresight to diversify the Group's identity to enter into the field of private care.

Building flats, or property for the sake of building per se, no longer excites him. What propels him forward these days is

using the Group's construction arm to find abandoned properties and transforming these in a way that their use can give something back to society.

"As a Group we are always trying to tap new niches. I grew up always wanting to do something different, preferring not to do what everyone else was doing and have the vision and courage to enter new fields...

"If I dream of some idea, which I believe would present new employment opportunities, I would start on trying to implement it tomorrow; if we can provide more beds in areas where they are needed, I'll drop everything and go... This is what gives me the biggest satisfaction these days; it's our duty to the community."

For him, 2020 will bring with it the joy of opening two new specialised homes: Casale Nuova in Paola, and Santa Rosa in Mosta for mental health and disability.

"Looking back, I have to say I met the objectives I set out to achieve in life and my wish is to continue giving for as long as Santa Marija [he's a devotee of Mosta's patron] decides to leave me on this planet." ■







# Vision 2020 and Beyond

PIO VASSALLO  
CEO, VASSALLO GROUP





## ***“The key to our success in meeting our collective target is investing in our people”***

**V**assallo Group is made up of several diverse elements, but there is one vital strand that brings them all together: a common vision. This underpins why we exist, where we are going and our purpose.

As group CEO, my overall priority over the past two years has been to define and communicate this vision – with the input of all our CEOs – to enable all of us to understand the importance of pulling the same rope so that we can reach our ultimate destination as a company.

One of the first things we asked ourselves is what Vassallo Group is about. What are our objectives? What is our ethos? What do we stand for?

We are obviously a target-driven company that sets out to make a profit. But the values Nazzareno Vassallo instilled in us mean that we have developed a proactive approach to social entrepreneurship; which is why we seek to create opportunities for others and are involved in sectors like healthcare, disability, mental health and autism. This is also why we support our local community.

I know all my colleagues gain great satisfaction when they meet clients at our various care centres and see with their own eyes how people in trying situations can be helped to develop. We have managed to give certain people a new lease of life and this can be put down solely to our passion for what we do. Much more than a job, it's a mission. We set the standard in the care sector and our delighted to see our benchmark is now becoming the norm.

The key to our success in meeting our collective target is investing in our people. We are providing professional coaching for all our managers – creating an

environment where they can discuss issues with someone outside of the organisation – that has proved hugely beneficial. I can say this with confidence as I am taking part in the programme myself.

We have an active leaders' forum, where participants update one another on what they are doing. It's amazing what can emerge from such a brainstorming forum; such as our vision, for example. That is not to say I do not occasionally have to remind personnel in various companies that we belong to the same Group. But we are getting there, and centralising our payroll department has undoubtedly been a positive step in that direction.

The Group has also been very active on the project front. Our €35 million student village at the University of Malta, which is our partner on this development, will be a fully-fledged campus accommodating around 800 students. It will also include four levels of car parking, as well as a commercial hub with restaurants and shops that will enhance student life and the area in general.

Meanwhile, The Vassallo Business Park in Burmarrad, spread over an area of 30,000sqm, is in the process of being transformed from a batching plant into a smart environment for clean industry. This innovative park has been well received by the market and demand is very promising. Our first tenants are expected to move in early next year in a new sector related to the medical field that will continue to shape the Maltese economy. We are proud to be delivering a state-of-the-art project that will have a positive impact on the surrounding environment while contributing to our economy.

We are also moving on the hospitality front. Our No.11 Hotel has just opened and Lands End is due to be operational next summer. Even though trends have been changing in the tourism sector – with the rise of Airbnb and destinations like Tunisia and Turkey picking up once again – we are confident that we are hitting the right markets and investing in the right sector.

I sincerely believe that Malta is at risk of being less attractive due to rampant building projects, too much construction and increasing traffic. We have to find innovative solutions to these issues, such as spending more time looking at sustainable development and improving management of traffic flows. We also have to be aware that the boom we've experienced will not go on forever, so a cautious approach is advisable.

However, we are extremely pleased with our performance over the past year and are continuing to invest in new initiatives and, of course, our people – who come from diverse countries and backgrounds but are considered as one family within this Group.

Casting an eye to the future, we are looking at opportunities in the education and sports sectors – the latter being a passion of mine – since we believe these areas form part of our mission to make a contribution to society. And of course, Jessica Farrugia from our accounts department deserves to be singled out for winning two golds at the Special Olympics this year. We were all thrilled by her achievement and are inspired as a Group to emulate her drive as we move forward. ■



# Vassallo & Vassallo Family Reunion

## VASSALLO BUSINESS PARK

Investment in a concrete batching plant some 50 years ago has evolved into a project that will see the development of around 28,000 square metres of industrial rental space in Burmarrad.

It all started when in the 1970s Vassallo Builders won a contract at the Danish Village in Mellieħa and the Vassallo siblings decided to set up a concrete batching plant on site.

This was a first for Maltese construction companies, according to Dennis and Jesmond Vassallo, who explained that the company then bought a plot in Burmarrad and moved the plant there, giving birth to Vassallo Concrete Supplies Ltd.

As the years rolled by, the five Vassallo brothers each went their own way.

In 1986, Vassallo Concrete Supplies branched off from Vassallo Builders and was solely run by Jesmond and Dennis's father, Francis, better known as Ċikku, while Zaren took control of Vassallo Builders.

That is the year when Dennis, then 17, started working with his father, focusing mainly on the administration side of the company. A couple of years later he was joined by his older brother Jesmond, who worked in the accounts department.

Vassallo Concrete Supplies has several projects to its name. It had been part of the construction of the 'new airport' in Luqa

and the Radisson Hotel at Ghajn Tuffieħa, among others.

Ċikku passed away in 2005 and four years later the two brothers joined forces with their uncle Zaren and his children to form a new company Vassallo Concrete Services where Pio Vassallo was appointed chairman and Dennis was appointed CEO. The other directors of the Vassallo partnership are Jesmond and Ruben Vassallo.

This move reunited the families running Vassallo Builders and Vassallo Concrete, who basically joined their respective plots in Burmarrad with the aim of developing The Vassallo Business Park and Ruben was appointed project architect.

The company is building a sprawling complex to host warehouses targeted for the medical industry and other related industries needing storage, logistics centres, and offices among others. At the new business park, which should be completed next year, there will also be space for retail outlets and parking spaces.

The complex will be spread over two levels and tenants will be spoilt for choice as they can choose spaces ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 square metres. Each unit will have its own mezzanine and office administration area.

Dennis and Jesmond note that investors have already expressed interest in renting space at the state-of-the-art complex, and discussions are ongoing with medical cannabis

*This year marks the  
10th Anniversary of a  
partnership between two  
Vassallo families that  
came together in 2009  
after an amicable  
partying of ways 23  
years earlier.*



Jesmond  
and Dennis  
Vassallo.



The colours of Vassallo Concrete chosen by the late Francis Vassallo who was a fan of the Italian National Team.





Dennis Vassallo, Jesmond Vassallo, Nazzareno Vassallo, Ruben Vassallo and Pio Vassallo.

companies. The first tenants will make the park their home in April of next year.

During its 10 years of existence, Vassallo Concrete Services Ltd has been engaged for some large projects, including the US Embassy complex in Ta Qali, a challenging feat considering the product requirements that had to be brought from abroad.

The completion of its latest project – the Burmarrad Business Park – will, however, signal the company's demise. Saying goodbye is proving emotional for Dennis and Jesmond.

The batching plant in Burmarrad, which for them was synonymous with their late father, is already being dismantled and the process brings to mind several nostalgic accounts that have been recorded photographically for posterity.

Dennis and Jesmond have seen the sector change over the past 30 years, with batching plants springing up

everywhere as building contractors working on large developments bought their own plant. The biggest industry challenges remain competition, price fluctuations and chasing clients for payment.

After spending their life working in the concrete industry, or, as Dennis jokingly put it, "*fit-trab*" (in the dust), they believe that joining forces with their cousins is the best decision they could have taken.

Pio maintains that the 10-year partnership with cousins Dennis and Jesmond has been a very positive experience. "Traditionally cousins in business are associated with disputes and conflicts – I am very honoured that the partnership with our cousins Dennis and Jesmond has united us like brothers and reinforced the excellent relationship that my father had with his late brother Ċikku". 🟩



Vassallo Business Park



Signing of partnership agreement, 15th January 2009.



# Training hard in every aspect of life

NATALIE BRIFFA FARRUGIA

CEO, CAREMALTA

**H**air pulled back and sporting a welcoming smile, Natalie Briffa Farrugia is an early bird who would have already done her meditation, processed her thoughts, prepared her daughters for school, sent emails and completed a 10km run before most of us would have even stumbled out of bed.

CareMalta's CEO has upped her training after her brother signed her up for Barcelona's half Ironman triathlon in May 2020 as a birthday present; a target she had wanted to reach by the time she was 45.

"I'm a morning person, I'm eager for the day and always happy to wake up... I feel my personal purpose in life is fulfilled through all that I do throughout the day," she says, adding that coming into everyday contact with ageing, is a constant reminder of the importance of remaining active.

The agility she displays in shifting between swimming, cycling and running for her triathlon training is something which is evident in Natalie's thinking and the way she runs CareMalta.

The pioneers of private residential care for the elderly, through her father's vision, Natalie dedicated 2019 to focusing on diversification and steering HILA into new areas of mental health.

"Many may think I'm being unrealistic but I believe there is no more room for growth in the elderly sector as the market is saturated. There are more beds than is actually required following a sudden interest in the market – we calculated there will be a surplus of 1,500 extra beds.

"As a gerontologist I welcome the introduction of an authority regulating the elderly sector but it saddens me to see the focus is still on growing our institutions – such as adding 500 more beds to St Vincent de Paul – which only serves to disconnect the residents from their community and place of birth.

"People are going into homes later and staying for a shorter period... So we took the decision not to add more beds to the market... Instead, we're focusing on providing specialised care in areas of disability, mental health, and





## ***“At the root of everything is the individual”***

neurodegenerative diseases in smaller homes in the community.”

Mental health is on CareMalta’s 2020 agenda as it invests its time, energy and finances into being involved in the de-institutionalisation of the sector, which ties in with the government’s vision.

“From a Vassallo Group Realty point of view we have an ongoing search for properties targeting accessibility, vicinity, and space. From a HILA perspective we know what the clients’ needs are; and from a CareMalta point of view we are interested in transferring our knowledge,” Natalie said.

Malta ranks very high in European league tables when it comes to institutionalising people, and the Group is keen to be a partner in providing a new model of mental health care in the community.

CareMalta has already embarked on a collaboration with Richmond Foundation to provide a mental health Level 4 course for those interested in providing care in this area.

This will remain an area of focus in 2020, as CareMalta starts reaping the first fruits of its iCare concept, which has involved training and workshops in 22 service values. The company seeks to imbue employees with its values of safety, quality, integrity, dignity, and development – five words that sum up what CareMalta stands for.

Customer service questionnaires show that CareMalta ranks very highly in the elderly sector and Natalie is comforted by comments such as “I feel I am cared for as a person” or “I feel safe in my environment”.

The company, however, did not fare so well when it came to giving employees recognition for their work, so CareMalta is devising a plan to ensure this area is strengthened.

The target is to understand the story behind each person and to become an even stronger employer. The CareMalta Group management team of 21 members recently returned from a three-day team building exercise in Sicily, where the focus was on living the iCare philosophy themselves and exploring ways of ensuring this trickled down to every person.

“If I’m not willing to care for the people in management roles, how do I expect them to transmit the same level of care to all employees, and in turn to our residents? In our service and care industry it cannot be otherwise... we have to see the person before the role; intrinsically, at the root of everything is the individual.” ■







# Burgeoning business for Vassallo Builders

JONATHAN BUTTIGIEG

**CEO, VASSALLO BUILDERS**

**O**ne of the main factors in keeping up with the ever-growing demand and still maintain an excellent reputation is to continue to invest in the company's own assets.

That is what Vassallo Builders was busy doing during 2019.

As the construction boom continues, the industry is faced with a shortage of labour resources: "Today is one of the most challenging times I can recall during the 27 years I have worked in this industry; I don't ever remember this level of activity."

This kept Vassallo Builders quite busy recruiting new employees, increasing its workforce from 260 to 355 workers in just over a year, with another 50 still needed to meet the requirements of the Group's upcoming hot projects.

"Finding the right skills is quite a feat. Unfortunately, the construction sector doesn't seem to attract local workers any more, so we have resorted to recruiting people from Eastern Europe, North Africa and Asia. This is usually a long process which involves screening, interviews, gathering of documentation, registration, and getting the "rubber stamps" from all the relevant authorities before we finally get the work permits; then there is the training and safety courses etc..."

Jonathan adds that apart from a shortage of human resources and material, this year the construction industry has provided new and tempting opportunities for key personnel in the organisation. "To skip the work permit process, other developers might try to lure our employees away from us by

***"Rather than one individual project, what excites me most is seeing the entire company working together as a team"***





tempting them with better pay. However, our workers know that the company was there for them when times were not so good, so they have a sense of loyalty towards the company, a sense of pride; and that is what differentiates us from the rest."

## What 2019 meant for the company's support sections:

The **joinery** section, which specialises in bespoke joinery including Maltese balconies, has met all its targets this year and received praise from APS Bank for the quality and timeliness of the completion of its branches.

The **metal** section, which focuses on wrought iron and structural steel projects has bolstered its relationship with old clients and forged new ones, while the **rebar** and **plant hire** sections have witnessed heavy investment.

The **scaffolding** section had a very busy year, with the company continuing to invest in its SM8 modular system that is flexible, fast to assemble and durable.

Meanwhile, the demand for the hire of **mobile offices** has grown rapidly and we continue to invest in new units to be able to meet the market requirements.

Overall, 2019 has been a good year for Vassallo Builders. Part of this success was surely due to the Group's culture and belief to balance between the business objectives of growth and profitability, while at the same time investing in its labour and equipment resources – a value the Vassallo family has instilled among their employees.

Vassallo Builders has invested heavily in new machinery, upgrading its existing rebar facilities, purchasing four cranes, formwork equipment and tower crane wind speed limiters among others. "The company reinvested its profit back into the business – an investment which we will reap in the coming years."

Apart from the construction of the Vassallo Business Park in Burmarrad and the Campus Hub project, Vassallo Builders has also been entrusted with the construction of the new car park at the Malta International Airport.

This project which kicked off last January, involves some 110 workers on site, and is currently at its peak. It consisted of oversite excavation, foundation bases, reinforced columns, beams, walls, precast planks and will result in the building of a three-storey car park. For this project the company employed a 24/7 roster to meet the challenging programme requirements, as well as to mitigate the site access challenges.

The project should reach completion in March 2020.

Other projects included the completion of the OneOneO development along the Sliema Front, progress on the Land's End hotel, also in Sliema, the completion of the building of the Mayflower Hotel in Qawra in November 2019, and more recently Casal Nuovo in Paola. Another project set to start in the coming weeks is the construction of a warehouse in Corradino industrial estate.

Does Jonathan have a favourite project?

"Rather than one individual project, what excites me most is seeing the entire company working together as a team. We need to communicate well internally to be able to successfully synchronise all the projects we have planned for 2020. We need to act professionally. We need to do our job." 🍷

# ‘We are here for the long haul’

RUBEN VASSALLO

CEO, VASSALLO GROUP REALTY

**A**s CEO of Realty, the Group’s property and development arm, Ruben Vassallo is rarely able to sit at his desk for very long since he is darting around the island checking on various projects happening at the same time.

“Realty had an exciting year,” an upbeat Ruben says with some justification. The Landmark in Qormi – featuring retail, offices and restaurants – has had another successful year, attracting more and more clients and visitors.

“When we bought it in 2009, it was a fairly quiet area but we saw the potential of the site and that is now being realised. We also welcome other developments happening around us. Some would view them as competition, but we see them as complementary.”

The Tagliaferro Business Centre in Sliema has also been a success, operating at almost full capacity with a solid corporate tenant base, which is keen to invest further in the building, while apartments in OneOneO, developed in partnership with another company, are being rented out by the Group.

“We only invest in prime locations and are in it for the long haul, which means we prefer to hang on to our properties for a number of years and make use of them rather than seek to make a quick turnaround. We don’t consider ourselves to be developers, but rather a property management company.

“The market is not as buoyant as it was a year or so ago, so we believe this is the right approach and, while we continue to seek new projects, we are looking at the future with caution. We tend to believe that speculators are a danger to the market.”

One project in the pipeline since 2009, the Vassallo Business Park in Burmarrad, has also finally taken off. Ruben says rental take-up has been very encouraging and the first tenants are expected to move in as early as April of next year.

“We are seeking out niche companies for this site and have earmarked a project for the medical cannabis industry. I am very excited about it.”

Realty is offering occupants a turnkey option and is also provisioning for a number of storage and distribution areas. The Group will retain ownership and will be letting and managing the properties, which it views as another long-term investment in its growing portfolio.

Ruben has also been focusing his attention on the properties run by HILA, which, under the umbrella of CareMalta, offers respite services and manages residential facilities for people with disabilities.

Following on from the success of Dar Bjorn and Casa Apap Bologna, Realty has been working on Casa al Nuovo which is under construction in Paola.

Ruben explains that the philosophy behind these homes is to create a homely feel, which means building smaller homes with individual areas to provide residents with more privacy.

“We don’t wish to build institutions; we want to build homes that are serviced and able to deliver care at various levels. Numbers tend to be smaller in the social field and there are more young people who we try and help integrate into society. Creating a family feel through the structure, and then of







***“We don’t wish to build institutions; we want to build homes”***

course through the services on offer, is an important step towards achieving that objective.”

The Group is also seeking to transform a property in Mosta into an apartment-style development that will incorporate an individual concept for its residents.

“The last thing we want to hear is that our buildings look like hotels. That’s actually offensive in the social field as we want residents to feel as they would in their own home. Of course, we have to incorporate facilities for those who are less able, but our properties in this field are designed with maximising residents’ independence in mind.”

He stresses that everything Realty does is a team effort that brings together various facets of Vassallo Group to create the best possible facilities. Since Ruben is an architect by profession, he is at the centre of many of the developments.

Looking ahead, Ruben already knows that 2020 will be a busy year for the Group and for Realty. “I am very hands on, constantly from one facility or development to another. And I have a very good team. We are proud of our people and the synergies we have created.” ■



Vassallo Business Park



# Roll on 2021

ALEX TRANTER

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CATERESSENCE

**A**s CaterEssence prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary in the coming year, the catering company plans to continue building on a successful 2019 that saw an expansion in all areas.

"CaterEssence's core competence emanates from its capability to deliver cost-effective, efficient and quality customised catering solutions to various sectors operating within the hospitality and healthcare sectors," says Alex, executive chairman of CaterEssence – a subsidiary of the Vassallo Group that specialises in contract catering and retail food activities.

Since it was set up almost a decade ago, CaterEssence has developed its operational activities into two major divisions: one specialising in delivering cost-effective catering solutions for three- and four-star hotels and restaurants, and another focusing on the production and provision of meals and a wide range of savoury items and pastries to care homes, schools and the retail food sector from CaterEssence's centralised industrial kitchen (CPU) in Qormi.

"Our capability for designing customised catering solutions and unique food products has enabled CaterEssence to maintain a very strong client base with a number of hotels, care homes, English language schools, restaurants and cafeterias.

"Our strength and reputation in the market, as well as being part of Vassallo Group means our strength and reputation in the market ensures a high level of professionalism and focused commitment towards all our clients. Our clients choose CaterEssence because we bring peace of mind, business continuity and tailor-made catering solutions. This is how we attract new business and grow," he says.

## A growing portfolio

"During 2019 CaterEssence's food-related business activities generated an approximate annual turnover of €10 million, employing over 250 staff," says Alex.

A number of new business activities started in 2019. The hotels and restaurants division

saw a new major client start in March – the Vivaldi Hotel in St Julian's.

"CaterEssence today is proud to be the strategic partner of Vivaldi in the provision of all food and beverage requirements to hotel guests. Services range from the provision of breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as the operation of the rooftop pool bar during the summer months, room service and all events and functions held at the hotel's conference and banqueting areas," he says.

The CPU division also witnessed new business activities with the provision of chilled meals to Casa Marija in Sliema, operated by CareMalta, as well as the provision of hot lunches to EC Malta, a leading English language school.

The CPU division also became the exclusive supplier of savouries and pastries for Virtu Ferries.


The division has also been supplying a number of three-star hotels with pre-cooked, portioned, chilled food which is regenerated on site at the respective kitchens operated by CaterEssence.

"The centralisation of the food production will ensure superior food consistency and food quality at each hotel location," Alex says.

## Looking forward

In 2020, CaterEssence will focus on consolidation, ensuring all existing operations enjoy fast and efficient operating procedures, consistent service quality and fabulous food.

"The hotels and restaurants division will start operations at the new No. 11 Hotel in Paceville – an exciting range of innovative food and beverage offerings for breakfast, as well as an all-new à la carte dining restaurant, which will be an integral feature of No.11. This new all-day dining à la carte restaurant, MADU, will offer a unique street



**"Our clients choose CaterEssence because we bring peace of mind... and tailor-made catering solutions"**



food fusion menu alongside an exciting cocktail and healthy beverage menu,” he says.

CaterEssence will also have a role in the Campus Hub at the University, says Alex – who is also one of the directors of this unique student accommodation project, scheduled to start operations in late 2021.

“This prestigious project is the largest single investment Vassallo Group has made in its 70-year history. There is no doubt Campus Hub will showcase the Group’s capabilities as one of the leaders in the construction and hospitality sectors. CaterEssence is looking forward to its involvement in the provision of catering services linked to this significant project.

“We are planning a range of very exciting and innovative catering offerings for students who will be residing at, or visiting, Campus Hub. Roll on 2021,” he says. ■



A man with short dark hair, wearing a dark suit and a light blue shirt, stands with his arms crossed and a slight smile. He is positioned in front of a large black banner that features the Vassallo Group logo and text. The banner also includes the phrase 'Another project entrusted to' at the top. The background shows a colorful, abstract mural on a wall.

# The socially conscious entrepreneurs

CHRISTIAN VASSALLO

**STRATEGY DIRECTOR, VASSALLO GROUP**

**V**assallo Group is going through an exciting period and Christian Vassallo confirms that its single largest investment – the Campus Hub, positioned between the University of Malta and Mater Dei Hospital – is right on track.

An Investment of €35 million and hosting 900 students, it will be located just outside the university's Gateway building, overlooking Wied Għolliet. The student village should be completed within two years, while parts of the project will be finalised at different stages over the next 24 months.

As part of the project, and to the relief of many, an underground car park with a capacity of at least 466 cars will open its gates by the end of next year.

The first 300 rooms should be completed by September 2021, and the whole project is expected to wrap up by the end of the following year.

The new residence and community complex will also host a 24/7 pharmacy – a first for the island according to Christian – together with a post office, restaurant, convenience shop, swimming pool and office block.

There will also be a small bar housed in an existing 100-year-old farmhouse.

"We had permission to relocate the farmhouse but we chose to keep the old building over adding extra parking spaces.

"For the Group, the value of the place is much more important than parking spots. The building has been there for over 100 years, while we are only going to be there for 60 years... Who are we to remove it?"

The Group has adopted the same conservation attitude with other projects, a prime example of which is Roseville, in Attard, one of Malta's only examples of art nouveau architecture that was beautifully converted into a home for the elderly, run by CareMalta.

For Christian, this socially conscious entrepreneur attitude adds value to the property, especially in terms of the family's legacy. Although in such cases the costs increase, it is well worth it in the end.

Specifically designed for students, the Campus Hub will be divided into several levels, with the lower grounds accessible to the public.

Keeping in mind that the hub will be a thriving living space, the project designers have allocated a lot of space to greenery and included an ecological area for students to relax.

Students were asked for their input from the very beginning. They were also invited to participate in a competition to design the hoarding that was set up around the construction site.

In the meantime, a survey is being circulated among students to collect their opinion about facility preferences.

Demand by boarding students has been positive so far, with the hub registering interest from English language students for the summer months.

Christian notes that for the next 60 years the place will be operated by Vassallo Group, which will be making sure that the staff – from the general manager to those who come face to face with residents on a daily basis, such as receptionists – will be trained to understand students' behaviour and look out for any red flags.

The project is extremely exciting and is advancing at a fast pace, he adds.

"When in July 2018 we achieved our 2020 vision, we designed a new 2023 vision, which we dubbed the 5X vision.

"We are happy to report that we are on track, with some projects being changed and adapted because of certain challenges, while others, like the university project advancing faster than we anticipated."

## ***"Providing an environment where equality is the norm is the best way to start fighting the issue"***

He believes this is possible thanks to the 1,900 "driven players within the family".

"I feel that as a family, the Vassallo Group has a huge responsibility towards society. We do very well financially so we have to give a lot back and try to be a good player in society. We cannot be passive observers and stand by the sidelines."

Looking back, he believes 2019 has been a good year for the Vassallo family and the Group is looking forward to 2020.

But at Vassallo Group, the targets are not just a yearly affair. Every day, its employees need to live up to the diversity and equality standards they signed up for.

And with half of the employees coming from 50 countries, diversity is a daily reality.

"I feel that tolerance is a huge responsibility for the Group. If our employees spend eight to 10 hours in an environment where everyone, no matter their gender, nationality or ethnicity, has to work together and be treated equally, they will not go home and behave differently there.

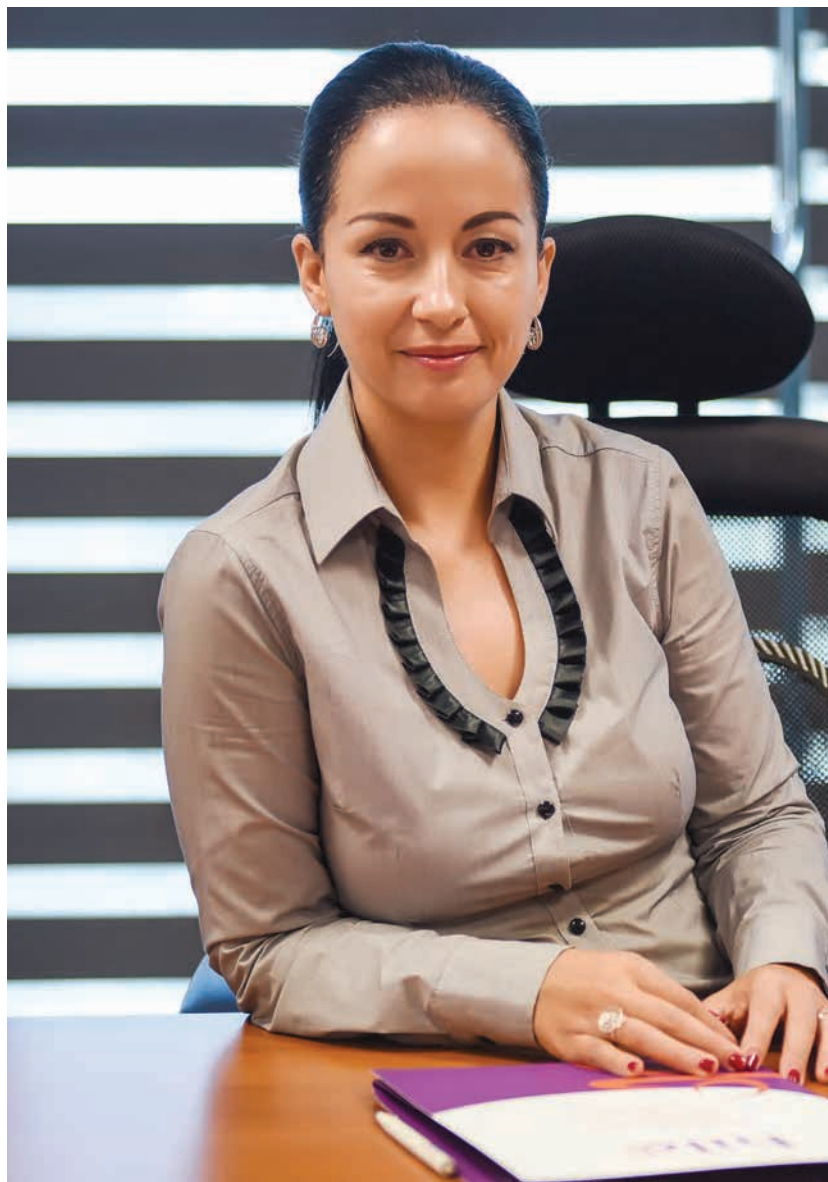
"I think that providing an environment where equality is the norm is the best way to start fighting the issue, which is unfortunately, rearing its head in society." ■



# Breaking the stigmas

JANET SILVIO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HILA



A mug of good coffee might start off her day well, however, Janet Silvio's main source of fuel is the people she meets at work – her staff and clients.

In fact, she prefers to work from Casa Apap Bologna, which in July 2018 started providing respite to people with disabilities and their relatives, in collaboration with *Aġenzija Support*.

One year later, the house hosts 250 clients and the staff complement increased from nine to 50. The clients have a mix of abilities – some are independent, some are semi-independent and others have acute conditions. The youngest client is aged five, while the eldest is over 70, and service is tailored for each client.

An in-house nurse and occupational therapist sets apart the service at Casa Apap Bologna from other respite places. Furthermore, HILA sometimes gets in touch with speech language therapists so that they can carry out a client's assessment at Casa Apap Bologna, sparing the client from having to go to the hospital for the same assessment.

How does HILA, the entity set up by CareMalta to provide services for people with disabilities, manage to combine the social caring aspect, with the profit-making one?

"It is not an easy question to answer. You need to find a balance – I always start off with the client's needs, immediately followed by the welfare of my staff.

"It is all about a mix of management and the maximisation of resources, finding the right people and never giving up. As a CEO I don't stay on the sidelines; I immerse myself in operations."

If Janet is away from the residence and feels overwhelmed or is just having a bad day, she pops by Casa Apap Bologna and immediately feels inspired.





***“Our strong point... is caring for the most acute and challenging conditions”***

This is because HILA's services are not just based on a business model made up of numbers and figures, but revolve around the well-being of human beings.

HILA, which Janet considers her baby, is currently in its toddler years. “Considering the rate at which it is growing, I would have to eventually let go and pass on the baton to Casa Apap Bologna. But right now, Casa Apap Bologna and myself still need each other.”

Apart from Casa Apap Bologna and Dar Bjorn, which hosts people with motor neuron or autoimmune diseases, and which HILA owns and manages in collaboration with the ALS Foundation, a third house is in the pipeline.

HILA will be making history in Malta with the opening of Casal Nuovo in Paola, which will host people with acute mental health conditions.

CareMalta has been eyeing the mental health sector for a while and the success of Casa Apap Bologna has inspired the Group with more determination to invest in the sector. Soon after the Mosta residence opened its doors, the government launched the national strategy for mental health and everything started falling into place.

“Our strong point – something we take pride in – is caring for the most acute and challenging conditions.

“We want to make a difference in the care sector by turning what currently is, into what it should be. It doesn't

mean that because something has been working for a number of years, it cannot be improved.”

Janet's heart broke when she recently visited one of HILA's clients at Mount Carmel Hospital as she believes no one should live isolated from the rest of society. Some people have remained at Mount Carmel Hospital as they have no one to care for them, while others have become institutionalised.

CareMalta is therefore investing in a community facility that is close to Paola's main square. Janet believes that the proximity to the community, just like in the case of Casa Apap Bologna, will help break the stigma.

Apart from benefitting from the facility's own environment and its location, reintegration within the community will also give the clients back their dignity.

“As we have seen at Casa Apap Bologna, it will be a slow process but not an impossible one. Clients will start by trusting the environment, then the staff and then adapt to the new residential arrangements.”

For Janet, the more challenging the situation, the more rewarding the outcome.

“When it comes to mental health, we want to make a difference – people have been forgotten for a long time, and it is time we gave them back their dignity.” ■



# Learning is lifelong process

CHARLO BONNICI

CEO, LEARNING WORKS

CareMalta's 2009 class of 30 prospective carers has grown into a full-blown autonomous learning centre that this year hosted 600 students.

When CareMalta started training its employees around a decade ago, it issued its own certificates until such courses required official recognition by law.

"We therefore needed to start providing accredited courses and, in view of our lack of experience in this field, we partnered with City and Guilds to provide a Level Three healthcare course.

"Although we initially offered this training to our own employees, the demand started growing, even from our competitors."

Ten years down the line, the course is still being offered; however, it is now one of several.

"After rebranding the CareMalta Academy last year, we realised that our training had the potential to grow, with education becoming one of the main pillars of the Group."

Learning Works Ltd was consequently set up in February as an autonomous institution distinct from CareMalta.

Charlo explains that what started off as a tuition centre transitioned into a further tuition education and training centre, and has now established itself as a further and higher education centre. Learning Works Ltd provides 13 courses ranging from Level One to Level Five as recognised by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education.

Apart from the Level Three healthcare course, the company now

offers an advanced healthcare course and has started specialising in mental health and disability issues among others.

It has also branched out to other sectors and offers a full diploma in leadership and management, which is popular with foreign students.

Meanwhile, a growing number of non-Maltese residents has seen an increased need of language courses, so Learning Works Ltd now also provides English and Maltese as foreign language courses.

While half of Vassallo Group's workforce is non-Maltese, certification of attendance of such courses has become a requirement for those who plan on residing in Malta for some time.

Charlo admits that the company faces stiff competition within the education sector; however, Learning Works Ltd believes it has a quality product that is also based on the Vassallo Group's employment experience.

Additionally, such experience allows the company to offer a hands-on food, beverage and hospitality course, which caters for students who come to Malta specifically to study.

An exciting yet challenging upcoming course will tackle managing diversity at the place of work, which allows supervisors and managers, among others, to learn how to deal with different cultures.

"We will be pioneers in this sector and we are also looking into branching out into the

sports sector, providing courses about psychology and nutrition among others."

On future plans to increase the number of courses, Charlo notes that the company doubled its student capacity over a year, with numbers projected to continue going up. For the time being, however, it is focused on consolidating its current courses.





***“There have been students who grew with us and... have worked their way up to a diploma”***

Over the past 10 years Charlo has seen several employees advancing one level at a time and specialising in certain sectors.

“There have been students who grew with us and despite having only a school leaving certificate when they joined Vassallo Group, they have worked their way up to a diploma. By

next year they will also be able to enrol for a degree.”

For him, the biggest satisfaction over the past decade has been seeing parents – mostly women who might have otherwise paused their career to take care of their family – take up the required basic caring course.

They enjoy the experience of going

back to school so much that they enlist for one course after another, working their way up to a diploma in management.

Learning Works Ltd is operating from Landmark in Qormi, where the facilities are also rented out to other entities that need to provide training to their own members or employees. ■





# A system that pays off

LEE XUEREB

GROUP PAYROLL MANAGER

**E**very four weeks Vassallo Group issues €2 million in salaries to a 1,900-strong workforce spread across its various companies.

The mammoth task of issuing payroll was centralised this year, in a move aiming to increase efficiency across the Group.

“Previously, the larger companies – CareMalta, Vassallo Builders and CaterEssence – had their own payroll department, while the smaller companies were amalgamated with one or the other. They all had their own system and way of working,” explains Vassallo Group payroll manager Lee Xuereb, who has been entrusted with streamlining the different systems.

The exercise started in 2018 when an internal audit into Vassallo Group was

initiated to improve processes. The auditors recommended centralising the different departments’ function more efficiently, allow for better economies of scale and to share best practices.

Pulling the departments together would also allow payroll staff to have the backup of colleagues and share a knowledge base.

This recommendation was taken on board and, following a number of meetings, a plan was drawn up.

## Payroll: Accounts or HR function?

One of the first decisions that had to be taken was whether payroll fell under human resources or accounts.

“By payroll, we’re talking about calculating and issuing salaries. I always believed that payroll is an HR function, because of all the employment laws and work regulation orders that come into it. That was not a common perception and, in other companies, it was part of accounts,” says Lee, who is qualified in organisational psychology, and who is also CareMalta’s HR Manager.

“With payroll our raw data consists of punching in and out, as well as department rosters. Putting those together to come up with the final salary of each person is what we do.

“In most instances, it’s not a simple Monday-to-Friday, 8am to 5pm computation. Life is not like that. People apply for leave, unpaid leave, overtime at different rates etc... That is where HR is better equipped to know where to access information to resolve such issues,” Lee adds.

## A whole new department

The decision was taken to set up a new, centralised payroll department, separate from the HR and accounts departments, within Vassallo Group. Each individual company retained its account and HR sections, but payroll was shifted to the centralised, newly set up department.

“The central payroll department, made up of a seven-strong team, has been functioning since March 2019. We are still in the early stages and there were a number of issues that





***“We still have a long way to go, but there have already been a number of advantages”***

had to be seen to – from space and storage to team changes. We still have a long way to go, but there have already been a number of advantages,” he says.

One of the biggest visible benefits was that grouping payroll staff together provided backup and support for the staff. On the other hand, one of the biggest challenges remains streamlining the different systems.

## Streamlining different systems

“At present we are working with three parallel systems – payrolls issued every two weeks, four weeks and monthly. The way forward would be to get to one system that suits everyone,” Lee says, adding: “But before things are absolutely stable, we will not introduce any major changes.”

And this is the goal for 2020: achieving that stability to function efficiently. Once that is done, the payroll department will move on to more ambitious goals, like aligning the systems.

It’s a challenge, but Lee – who joined CareMalta 11 years ago and took on the role of HR manager in 2015 – is not afraid of challenges.

“We have done a lot of valuable work. I was lucky that my predecessor, Charlo Bonnici, set up a solid structure. In the past four years, CareMalta has seen a 50 per cent expansion. We’ve faced many challenges – to find the right staff and retain our people. And now, the next challenge is to take on the payroll function for the benefit of the entire Group,” he says. ■



# Life after clocking off



## Jessica Farrugia

Jessica has employment targets that she reaches at her place of work, but once she clocks out, her eyes are set on another set of targets – of the bowling kind.

The 35-year-old, who has been working with Vassallo Group for three years and currently holds the role of junior clerk within the Accounts Department, has been bowling for 12 years.

She practises with her training coach three times a week, while on Tuesdays she takes part in a league with adults from professional teams. Every month she also competes against other athletes within the Special Olympics team.

2019 has been a good year for Jessica who bagged two gold and one bronze Special Olympics medals in Abu Dhabi.

Jessica has struck up new friendships through bowling, and her parents believe the sport has also helped her gain life skills and confidence that allow her to take minor decisions independently and integrate in a socially acceptable manner.

Her own motto is: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."



## James Sciriha

In 2012, James decided he had put on too many kilos. Seven years and 11 half-marathons later he has shed the extra weight and managed to regain a healthy lifestyle.

James, who is responsible for CareMalta Group's operations and is the Group's director of finance, used to play football. After some idle years he decided it was time to take up physical exercise again, so he chose running as it allowed him some flexibility.

Half-marathons remain his preferred distance, with his best time clocked in Copenhagen at 1.14:45. There he placed 254th out of 24,000 athletes.

Together with his club Mellieħa AC, he has also won the last two National Road Running Leagues and the 2018 Road Running Relay. In April he will be participating in his first full marathon in Brighton.

"Running means a lot to me as it is the time when I free my mind of any thoughts and worries. I also come up with new ideas, challenge my own opinions and take decisions during my runs. Running taught me that if you want to achieve results, you have to work hard."

Vassallo Group is a firm believer in working hard, and playing hard, and the family themselves have adopted this philosophy to life to lead by example. Here four employees share their experiences.



## Elisa Camilleri

Elisa may be scared of flying, but this has not stopped her from travelling far... just as she has done within Vassallo Group.

Elisa was originally employed with the Group 13 years ago as an accounts clerk. She continued progressing up the career ladder, and currently holds the role of human resources executive.

The 33-year-old has always believed in the importance of a work-life balance and she allows enough time for sport and travelling.

“For me, travelling is an escape from mundane things towards the discovery of other cultures. It also helps me enrich my knowledge by creating memories.”

Over the past year, she has crossed two countries off her bucket list: Japan and Iceland.

She would definitely revisit Japan, a place rich in culture, perfectionism, mind-blowing sceneries, incredible history, picturesque gardens and amazing architecture.

Iceland, meanwhile, is the perfect destination for an adventurous road trip. It transported her into another reality, with friendly locals, breathtaking sceneries, and natural hot springs.



## George Azzopardi

George is ‘prepared’ for any eventuality at work – where he manages the scaffolding and plant sections – and away from work, where he is a leader in the Beaver section within the Fgura Scout Group.

The 43-year-old joined the Vassallo Group’s Civil Section in December 2008.

He took on the role of scaffolding manager in February 2011 and started managing the plant section in November 2015.

When he is not at work, George volunteers in outdoor activities such as camping organised by the Fgura Scout Group, and he also supports the Scouts Council with their fundraising activities and events.

He has been a Scout Leader for the past four years, with scouting filling him with positive energy and providing him with a sense of fulfilment.

Scouting, he believes, enriches you with skills for life and prepares you for all circumstances and situations. ■



# 2020 promises to be even stronger

STEPHEN BORG

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, VASSALLO GROUP



## Growth in all areas predicted for 2020

2020 is set to be a strong year for Vassallo Builders Group with growth predicted in all areas, according to the Finance Director.

"Vassallo Builders Group is budgeting growth in all areas in 2020, with a planned increase in consolidated turnover in the region of five to seven per cent, with a resulting increase in EBITDA," says Stephen Borg, who is also Director of CaterEssence.

"I believe the Group's key success factors are specialisation and focus. Throughout its development, the Group has carefully chosen its niche areas of business, gained proficiency and is now seeking specialisation. With Malta nearing saturation in the elderly market, growth in this area will mainly focus on more specific areas," Stephen says.

So, while continuing to nurture all its existing business lines, in 2020 the Group will focus on two major new

projects: the Vassallo Business Park in Burmarrad and the University Residence and Commercial Complex, he says.

## Strong financial performance

While figures for 2019 are still unpublished, they promise to be stronger than 2018, when the Group enjoyed an excellent performance, generating a consolidated revenue of €61.5 million. This resulted in an operating profit of €8.3m, up from €7.1m in 2017, and a profit before tax in excess of €20m.

The Group continues to focus on EBITDA as its main key performance indicator and this increased to €11.6m for 2018.

***"I believe the Group's key success factors are specialisation and focus"***

"These very satisfactory results come from a good performance from all the sectors within which the Group is involved," he says, adding that the Group always had a strong relationship with local banks, based on trust earned through a relationship going back over 70 years.

During 2018 Vassallo Builders Limited generated a revenue of €20m and a profit before tax in the €1m region. The property rental arm generated revenue of just above €5m and registered a profit before tax of €12.1m, including investment income.

CareMalta revenue exceeded €33m in 2018 and resulted in a healthy increase in EBITDA and profit before tax.

"Projected results for 2019 appear to build on the results achieved last year. With a stronger revenue being generated in both construction and care services, the Group is anticipating respective increases in EBITDA and profit before tax," he says, adding that 2020 promises to be even stronger. ■

## VASSALLO GROUP

**Martin Bondin** Group Data Protection Officer/ Health and Safety Manager  
**Anton Dimech** Purchasing Clerk

**Elisa Camilleri** HR Executive  
**Maria Christine Pillow** Senior Marketing Executive

## VASSALLO BUILDERS

**Deborah Meilak** Personal Assistant to CEO  
**Yana Seychell** Receptionist  
**Marica Schembri** Accounts Clerk  
**Carol Cassar** Director of Finance  
**Diego Moreschi** Technical Officer

**Kevin Drew** Trainee Supervisor  
**Luke Ciantar** Quantity Surveyor  
**Noel Bonello** Works Manager  
**Mandy Maria Vella** Accounts Executive  
**Marlon Schembri** Contracts Manager

## CAREMALTA

**Alain Masson** Facility Manager  
**Dylan Bezzina** Assistant Facility Manager  
**Paul Pace** Customer Services Training Manager  
**Roslynn Vella** Facility Manager  
**Eleanor Demanuele Farrugia** Assistant Centre Manager  
**Michelle Mercieca** Junior HR Executive  
**Emanuel Fenech** Facility Manager

**Alexandra Borg** General Manager  
**Charmaine Scicluna** HR Assistant  
**Kimberly Buhagiar** Payroll Clerk  
**Insaf Elhilali** Payroll Clerk  
**Simone Vella** Facility Manager  
**Gemma Cassar** Facility Administrative Assistant  
**Susan Borg** Facility Administrative Assistant

## CATERESSENCE

**Bojona Zammit** Assistant Restaurant Manager (Hotels Division)  
**Charles Bartolo** Restaurant Manager (Hotels Division)  
**Christian Muscat** Outlet Manager (The Cakebox)  
**David Jaros** Restaurant Manager (Hotels Division)  
**Dejan Veljkovicj** Logistics Coordinator  
**Fernando Blanco** Restaurant Manager (Oia)  
**Giuseppe Filletti** Sales & Events Executive  
**Hubert Friggieri** Procurement Executive  
**Jonathan Vella** Corporate Head Chef 4-Star Hotel (Hotels Division)  
**Jozsef Banicz** Sous Chef (Oia)  
**Justin Schieda** Head Chef (Oia)  
**Katia Digrandi** Acting Restaurant Manager (Panorama)  
**Kevin Mifsud** Tournant (CPU Kitchen)  
**Melaine Xuereb** Accounts Executive  
**Neil Gouder** Head Chef (CPU Kitchen)

**Ramon Ceci** Financial Controller  
**Twanny Attard Jr** Sous Chef (Hotels Division)  
**Wyatt Zammit** Sr Sous Chef (Hotels Division)  
**Keith Mangion** Service Operations Manager (Hotels Division)  
**Walid Masri Mosbah Zumyat Jr** Sous Chef (Restaurants Division)  
**Philip Farrugia** Tournant (Hotels Division)  
**Mark Bone** Sr Sous Chef (Hotels Division)  
**Lisa Bugeja** Sous Chef (Hotels Division)  
**Emanuele Valerio** Head Chef (Panorama)  
**Joseph Fardell** Head Chef (Pastry)  
**Keith Scerri** Assistant Restaurant Manager  
**Julian Vella** Sr Purchaser  
**Christian Tramontana Jr** Sous Chef (Restaurants Division)  
**Josef Grech Jr** Sous Chef (Restaurants Division)

## VASSALLO GROUP REALTY

**Simon D'Agostino** Security Officer  
**Mario Farrugia** Maintenance Technician

**Christian Mallia** Maintenance Technician





**BEST MANAGER AWARD**

STEFAN MICALLEF AND STUART CARUANA



**BEST EMPLOYEE AWARD**

MARY AGIUS



**BEST SUPERVISOR AWARD**

JOANNA HODGES AND WILLIAM XERRI



**BRAND AMBASSADOR AWARD**

JOANNA FARRUGIA



**THE 3 RS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

VILLA MESSINA MANAGEMENT TEAM



**BEST MANAGED PROJECT AWARD**

ONE ONE O PHASE 3



**CUSTOMER FOCUS AWARD**

MARIANNA ABELA



**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARD**

EMANUEL TABONE



**EMPLOYEE WELL BEING AWARD**

VIVIAN PSAILA



**EXTRA MILE AWARD**

ADRIANA CORTIS



**EXTRA MILE AWARD**

CARMEL BORG AND FRANCIS GATT



**EXTRA MILE AWARD**

CHARLES VELLA



**ICARE**



**SERVICE QUALITY AWARD**

MICHEAL VELLA



**SERVICE QUALITY AWARD**

WALID ZUMYAT



**THE CHAIRMAN'S AWARD**

KEVIN DEBATTISTA



**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AWARD**

EROS GALEA



**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AWARD**

JOANNE VIDAL



**HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD**

DRAGOMIR AKSENTIC



# Vassallo Builders



## 5 YEARS

Anthony Bartolo  
Caroline Borg  
Stephen Borg

## 10 YEARS

Ali Mohamed Abdiraham  
Joseph Abela  
George Azzopardi  
Chernor Bah  
Christian Ianes Borg  
Kevin Cardona  
Donnalise Caruana  
Patrick Kingsley Chukwuma  
Teodor Curta  
Anthony Delia  
Saviour Demanuele  
Oumar Gueite Fode

Alfred Frendo  
Martin Galea  
Joshua Benjamin Gauci  
Iliya Petev Iliev  
Hristo Raychev Ivanov  
Henry Jerry  
Simo Karaivanov  
Novica Knezevic  
Srdjan Kostic  
Srdan Kvrpic  
Luke Micallef  
Andrea Mifsud  
Radomir Milovanovic  
Georgi Dimitrov Mitrev  
Monday Omoruyi  
Safet Patkovic  
Joseph Sacco  
Spiridione Sciberras  
Edin Silajdzija  
Harvinder Singh  
Ravinder Singh  
Varinder Singh

Golubovic Slavoljub  
Krasimir Nedyalkov Slavov  
Mark Spiteri  
Dragan Stamenkovic  
Tencho Zhivkov Tenchev  
Svetomir Todorovic  
Vincent Tonna  
Miodrag Topic  
Sead Valentic

## 15 YEARS

Richard Attard  
Anna Bugeja  
Kevin Caruana

## 20 YEARS

Eugenio Agius  
Dragomir Aksentic  
Joseph Aquilina

Gordon Micallef  
Stephan Sladden

## 25 YEARS

Andrew Zammit

## 30 YEARS

Mario Abela  
Mario Caruana

## 40 YEARS

Joseph Bezzina  
Mario Cortis



# CaterEssence

## 5 YEARS

Lorenzo Crivellaro  
Kevin Debattista  
Andre Mckay  
Mehari Yowhannes Nugese  
Sandra Portelli



# CareMalta



## 5 YEARS

Liezl.N Adalim  
Antoinette Agius  
Rita Aquilina  
Alison Azzopardi  
Sophie Barnes  
Charmaine Bonanno  
Jacqueline Bonnici  
Maria Lourdes Bonnici  
Ronald Borg  
Lisa Bray  
Sylvia Briffa  
Emilio Buttigieg  
Marcelle Buttigieg  
Joseph Camilleri  
Sylvia Camilleri  
Antoinette Caruana  
Carmen Casha  
Rona Castilloalabutan  
Romina Colombo  
Rani Cyriac

Annmarie Dalli  
Janet Dalli  
Ruth Davison  
Mario Debattista  
Dorcas Debono  
Pamela Desira  
Joanna Farrugia  
Gianella Fenech  
Zvetlana Galea  
Abigail Grech  
Miriam Grillo  
Christian Lector  
Edera Magro  
Josephine Meli  
Maria Muscat  
Stefano Muscat  
Sarah Pace  
Mary Rose Said  
Brian Saliba  
Mary Anne Scerri  
Sandra Scerri  
Noel Schembri  
Ruth Scicluna

Charlene Spiteri  
Mphoniana Spiteri  
Elissa Sultana  
Sanja Tripkovic  
Jonathan Xuereb  
Rita Zammit

## 10 YEARS

Audrey Attard  
Sarah Jane Brincan  
Roseanne Brown  
Bernice Cuschieri  
Angela Darmanin  
Charlene Debono  
Maryanne Degabriele  
Josianne Mercieca  
Josette Muscat  
Mariella Muscat  
Stephanie Muscat  
Seraphina Pace  
Mario Scerri

Adelaide Spiteri  
Rita Vella  
Leon Xuereb  
Alexandra Zammit

## 15 YEARS

Antonia Bonnici  
Doreen Borg  
Edel Borg Mizzi  
Glenda Busuttill Risiott  
Ersilia Cassar  
Rita Cassar  
Josianne Coleiro  
Mary Deguara  
Nadia Farrugia  
Maria Romina Mintoff  
Frans Portelli  
Margaret Saunders  
Carmen Tanti

## 20 YEARS

Alexsandra Calafato  
Angela Dimech  
Rita Mallia

## 25 YEARS

Carol Formosa



# Vassallo Group



## 5 YEARS

Martin Bondin  
Jacqueline Cordina  
Audrey Muscat  
Lawrence Sultana



## 20 YEARS

Pio Vassallo





## Back to our roots

Nazzareno Vassallo celebrated his 52nd anniversary of heading the Group with an event at a garage in Mosta, which is where the success story all started.



## Well-being top of Foundation agenda

The importance of Vassallo Group's Employee Assistance Programme was stressed by Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo and Arkati Foundation chairman Joe Saliba as they visited 18 facilities to mark Arkati Foundation Day.

Vassallo Groups' Employee Assistance Programme, which is an employee benefit programme aimed at helping employees deal with personal problems that might impact their performance, health and well-being.

The services are being offered through the Richmond Foundation, a non-governmental organisation which runs a staff and organisation support programme.

Founded 27 years ago, the Foundation has built up an employee solidarity fund aimed helping those going through hard times where staff donate a day of leave or a small contribution that complements the substantial sum set aside by the company for this purpose each year.

Facilities ranging from CareMalta, HILA homes and CaterEssence to developments, such as Vassallo Business Park, were visited.

## Spotlight on Campus Hub during Freshers' Week

Vassallo Group took part in Freshers' Week at the University of Malta for the second consecutive year. The main focus was to create awareness on its new project Campus Hub, a purposely built university residence complex located between the University of Malta and Mater Dei Hospital.







## Chairman's Lunch

Health Minister Chris Fearne was the guest of honour at the annual Chairman's Lunch organised by Vassallo Group, which was once again held at the Hotel Phoenicia.

Around 150 guests including major stakeholders, directors and employees attended this event and were presented with a book, along with a copy of *Arkati Magazine*.

## Christmas staff party

A special Blue and Silver cake was created by CaterEssence to match the theme for the 2018 Christmas Staff Party, which enabled staff to end the year in style.



## Group marks International Women's Day

Around 150 women including directors, managers and employees from across the Group, as well as external stakeholders were invited to a reception by the Group to mark International Women's Day.

During a special video, women from different companies within the Group spoke about their personal views on finding balance between their work and personal lives in light of this year's theme #BalanceForBetter.

Vassallo Group CEO Pio Vassallo congratulated his sister Natalie Briffa Farrugia for winning the first ever 'Businesswoman of the Year Award' as CareMalta's CEO as well as his younger sister Charlene Vella Vassallo for graduating with a Masters in Human Rights while raising three young children.



## Group seminar

Viviana Premazzi from Global Mindset Developer was the guest speaker at a corporate seminar organised by the Group to discuss Cultural Diversity at the Workplace. This topic is particularly significant for a Group that employs over 1,900 staff from around 50 different countries.





## Courtesy call

Vassallo Group directors led by Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo paid a courtesy visit to President George Vella at The Palace in Valletta shortly after Dr Vella's appointment.



## Bring Your Child to Work Day

Children got to accompany their parents to work at Vassallo Group recently, where they could enjoy a day filled with fun activities – from a splash event, to various crafts and cooking sessions – which left a big smile on their faces.



## Over €9,000 raised on Dress Down Day

Employees raised around €9,000 for charity during the Group's annual Dress Down Day. Over €7,500 went to Puttinu Cares while €1,500 was collected by CareMalta to be donated to the Breast Care Foundation.



## Thinking green at the workplace

Think Green was the topic chosen for the last annual Vassallo Builders seminar, held at The George Hotel. Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, Group CEO Pio Vassallo and Vassallo Builders CEO Jonathan Buttigieg all delivered speeches, together with two guest speakers who delved into the concept of thinking green at the workplace and beyond.

## Summer party with a view

Employees from Vassallo Group Realty ushered in summer by with a party on the terrace of one of the lovely penthouses at OneOneO, the new development along the Strand, Sliema, which boasts panoramic seaviews of Valletta's Grand Harbour, surrounded by bastions, Sliema Creek, Manoel Island and Ta' Xbiex yacht marina.







## CareMalta CEO wins Malta Businesswoman of the Year Award

CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia clinched the first edition of the Malta Businesswoman of the Year Award, capping a remarkable journey that started from teaching primary students, tending to the vulnerable in Ethiopia and Guatemala, and now leading one of Malta's largest elderly home service providers.

With Natalie at the helm of CareMalta, the business has been transformed from six homes, with 437 employees in 2008, to nine state-of-the-art facilities, with over 1,000 employees and nearly €27m in turnover as of 2017.

When not busy implementing high-care standards at work, Natalie gets involved in the lives of her two young girls, contributes to Living Waters Mission and prepares for her next marathon.



## Halloween at Head Office

Things got spooky at Vassallo Group's Head Office on October 31, when staff organised an office get-together to get into the spirit of Halloween.



## Feast of snails

A *bebbuxata* was held at San Martin Estate in April for all the male office staff.



## Going green for St Paddy

Vassallo Builders goes Irish at Head Office with drinks and nibbles for all employees at Head Office who gathered to celebrate St Patrick's Day in March.





## President's 'special' visit

President George Vella recently visited CareMalta's facility in his hometown, Żejtun Home, where he met many friends and acquaintances. This visit was clearly special for him since he got to see many familiar faces and reminisce about the past.



## Thank you for your work

Vassallo Builders organised a lunch to thank employees working at the Malta International Airport carpark and Vassallo Business Park site in Burmarrad. CaterEssence provided lunch on both sites in September.



## Vassallo Builders party the night away

Vassallo Builders' annual summer party was held in August with a BBQ buffet catered by CaterEssence. Employees got the chance to let their hair down and enjoy a night away from the workplace with karaoke, food and drink.



## CareMalta's special festa atmosphere

Casa San Paolo recreated a traditional village festa including band marches and traditional food and drink for residents who no longer have the opportunity to attend such events. The event was organised with the support of volunteers and the

participation of residents themselves to make the event truly special. The festa is one of the main events forming part of the company's Active Ageing programme for the 1,600 residents under CareMalta's care.





## Are you being served?

CareMalta held a role change day with a difference whereby top management took on the role of chefs and hosts serving residents at Żejtun Home, one of the nine homes operated by CareMalta, in line with the company's 'here to serve' mission.

The management team started off the day bright and early in preparation for a lavish lunch with the supervision of CaterEssence's expertise. They prepared food, set up tables, plated and served residents.

A life-size frame with a fancy background was set up in the reception area where residents could take a photo as a special memento of the occasion.

In another event, CareMalta held 'Tea with the CEO' where I Care influencers discuss the service excellence programme with CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia.

The programme was launched last year to mark CareMalta's 25th Anniversary. The programme focuses on three pillars: Compassion, Engagement and Professionalism where everyone speaks a common language: the language of care.



## ICare launched at HILA

CareMalta's service excellence programme, ICare, was launched at HILA earlier this year.

The programme, originally developed with the company's training partners Think Talent, aims to take the quality of service to the next level.

During the launch, hosted by ICare manager Paul Pace, employees were introduced to the three pillars of ICare: Professional, Engagement and Compassion. ICare is being delivered through 12 service values.



## CareMalta marks World Alzheimer's Day

CareMalta marked World Alzheimer's Day in September with an event at Villa Messina, one of its nine homes, aimed at raising awareness about the challenges and stigma surrounding dementia.

The event featured a varied programme of arts, literature and music during which residents and staff contributed through music, dance and literature. Residents were also treated to musical intermezzos by cellists Gilmour Peplow and Stelios Pittas.

CareMalta's homes offer person-centred care in a dementia-friendly environment.



## Summer Staff Party

CareMalta's fun in the sun... the Group's annual summer staff party was held at Amazonia Beach Club last August.





## CareMalta residents compete in water games

Summer in Malta is synonymous with the sun, beach and swimming, so CareMalta organised a fun-filled day of activities – Aqua Games – for residents from all of CareMalta’s facilities.

The event, which formed part of the company’s Active Ageing programme for its 1,600 residents, was held by the pool at Casa San Paolo with entertainment by Joe Demicoli.

The residents, who divided up into teams representing their homes, took part in water games and swimming competitions. Cospicua Home secured first place and proudly took the trophy home to share their victory with peers.



## Visit to Lourdes ‘unforgettable experience’

CareMalta organised a second pilgrimage to Lourdes for residents who described the trip as an “unforgettable experience”.

The group, accompanied by CareMalta managers, attended Mass and visited the sanctuary as well as joining other pilgrims for the celebration of an international service. They were also taken on a funicular ride to the magnificent Pont d’Espagne which boasts magnificent views.

The trip was concluded with a special Maltese mass celebrated in the grotto sanctuary along with a ride through the village on the petit train.



## A touch of love

Valentine’s Day was a special one for all the couples living in CareMalta’s homes. A lavish lunch was held at the Mellieħa home to celebrate the feast of love and reminisce on past romances.



## CareMalta celebrates Mnarja

CareMalta organised a celebration on the eve of Mnarja by inviting residents to the Żejtun Home, which was transformed to display an exhibition of fruit and vegetables along with a showcase of old farm equipment related to this feast. One of the residents also displayed his personal collection of handmade woodwork.

The main event was held in the garden where an exhibition of animals was displayed for the residents to enjoy. A number of gazebos were set up along with stalls for drinks, ice-cream, freshly cooked *imqaret*, and a *fenkata*.





# Casa Apap Bologna reopens as respite centre

Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta was officially reopened after being transformed into a respite centre with 21 beds for people with severe disabilities in the first public-private partnership of its kind.

The Home's Executive Director, Janet Silvio, said the respite centre would enable relatives or carers to get the rest they need, while people with a disability receive therapeutic services in a safe environment.

The Home is managed by Hila within the Vassallo Group and comprises 25 rooms, a multi-sensory garden, a games room for adults and another one for children.



# Mental health course

The Richmond Foundation and Learning Works, a subsidiary of Vassallo Group, have teamed up to work on an accredited programme in mental health care and support.

The course will be offered to all those currently involved in caring for people with mental health issues, and is also particularly relevant to those intending to work in this sector.

This four-month course covers a number of areas related to mental health such as ethics and communications, care planning and risk management in a mental health setting.



# Learning Works Inaugurates New Training Hub

Learning Works Ltd, a subsidiary of the Vassallo Group, is now operating from a new Training Hub in Qormi that was inaugurated by Group Chairman Nazzareno Vassallo.

Accredited by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education, Learning Works offers a suite of accredited vocational courses ranging from health care to hospitality, from management to languages.

It also offers courses in mental health support and care, support for people with a disability and managing diversity at the workplace.

The new Training Hub, located within the Group's The Landmark development, has a number of lecture rooms and facilities to cater for different needs and is conveniently located opposite the Marsa Park & Ride facility.

Learning Works CEO Charlo Bonnici said Vassallo Group had decided to increase its investment in education and training and will be unveiling further initiatives in this sector.







## Mental wellbeing under the spotlight

Mental Wellbeing as We Age was the theme chosen for CareMalta's fourth forum, which brought together stakeholders to foster further collaboration and make a difference to people's lives, while constantly improving on systems and services.

Mental Health Commissioner John Cachia said ageing was a reality we must all take care of, and stressed the importance of placing respect and dignity at the forefront of care.

Among the speakers were clinical psychiatry chairman Anton Grech who tackled the differences between mental illness in old persons as opposed to the young; Richmond Foundation CEO Stephanie Sant who expressed concern about the gaps in the system or lack of services available; and Social Wellbeing Faculty dean Andrew Azzopardi who spoke about the stigmas of mental health and the need for greater awareness.

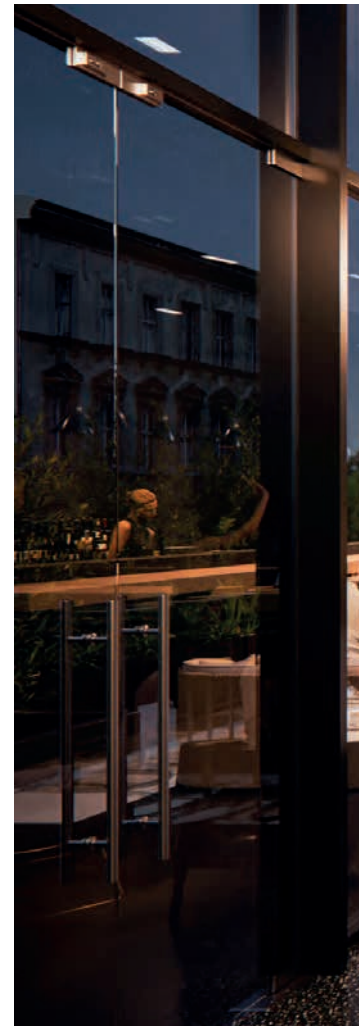


## CaterEssence summer staff party

The 2019 CaterEssence summer staff party featured Mexican and South American style food for employees who enjoyed a night of fun with entertainment by DJ Tony Tony at Razzett L-Abjad.

## CaterEssence take over Antonio's

CaterEssence has been subcontracted to provide catering at Antonio's Restaurant at the Golden Tulip Vivaldi Hotel in St Julian's. Its dining room recently underwent a major reconstruction with a spacious kitchen and bar, which provides fast and easily accessible services for all kinds of food and beverage. Meanwhile, Settimo Cielo Rooftop Bar provides casual dining and a cocktail bar with breathtaking views.







## CaterEssence welcomes MADU

Number 11, the hip and spanking new urban hotel in St Julian's, has just opened its restaurant MADU, which will be run by CaterEssence. Located along Triq Schreiber, MADU is offering all-day dining, with street food infused and inspired by dishes from around the world. The menu offers a vast selection for vegans and vegetarians, as well as an array of cocktails.







# Love for Mosta runs deep in the Vassallo family

Over the years, Vassallo Group has focused in investing its resources in supporting the Mosta community where most of its business is based.

"We feel obliged to give back to the Mosta community. The Group has been doing this since the company's inception 73 years ago," Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo says.

They work on connecting with the community by supporting events that are important to the locals. This is why Vassallo Group offers a range of services during the much-loved Santa Marija feast, celebrated in August: from sponsorships to providing equipment like cranes, trucks, vans, forklifters and generators.

Meanwhile, Vassallo Joiners handles the manufacture and supply of 14 statue pedestals in Eucharistic Congress Road, where the chairman's office is located.

The Group's involvement goes beyond the August celebrations. Over the years the Group helped the Mosta parish and oratory and supported both the Santa Marija and Nicolò Isouard band clubs and *Socjetà Piroteknika 15 ta' Awwissu* with their fireworks, even helping with the manufacture of the *Reddiena*, or ground fireworks, for the feast.

The love for the locality runs so deep that in 2007, as the then president of the Nicolò Isouard band club, Mr Vassallo asked the Mosta archpriest to present the Church authorities with the Mosta people's wish – to upgrade the Mosta Rotunda into a Basilica to mark the occasion of its 400-year anniversary as a parish the following year.

***"We feel obliged to give back to the Mosta community"***

The request was eventually approved and announced by Archbishop Charles Scicluna in 2018. Ahead of the anticipated event in 2018, Mr Vassallo financially helped fulfil the Vatican's request for the altar, ambone and sede to be made of marble.

Beyond helping the church, and other voluntary organisations in Mosta, the Group has also been active in promoting sports in Malta – it has supported the participation of its CEO in a number of cycling challenges for charity, and been the main sponsor for the Mosta Cycling Club for over 30 years.





The Group CEO's passion for the Mosta Football Club is also well renowned and for the past year has been supporting the Mosta FC Youth Academy, and be one of its main sponsors for the next three years.

Scaffolding Solutions regularly helps during Mosta Scouts' events by setting up scaffolding for fundraisers, such as abseiling and zip-lining activities.

And every year the Group maintains traditions that include dress-down days in aid of Puttinu Cares Foundation and other CSR activities when employees get busy with construction, cleaning, IT support, gardening and anything else necessary in aid of various charities.

All this is very important for the Vassallo family and the people who work with the Group. "We intend to keep this support going for years and years to come," the Group chairman says. 🟩





# Care as a common language

*I Care* is all about applying a person-centred approach.  
Arkati speaks to training manager PAUL PACE.

## *I Care* – More than just a job

CareMalta has always believed that the best way to care for residents is to ensure that those looking after them are trained, motivated and interested in what they do.

So in May 2018, the team carefully researched and designed the *I Care* Service Excellence programme to keep improving levels of care.

“Focusing on a person-centred approach is key to successful well-being among our residents, who are at the heart of everything we do.

“To achieve this, one must have the right mindset to possess the correct attitude and behaviour to do what it takes to make

his/her job special for them,” says *I Care* training manager Paul Pace, who was involved in designing the programme.

While technical competence is important, he says, over the years the multicultural nature of the staff flagged a new need – to invest in aligning people’s attitudes towards work.

## One common language

“Through our *I Care* programme, we are creating one common language – caring about one another,” Paul says.

Built on three pillars of compassion, engagement and professionalism, the 2018/2019 programme consisted of a





***“We are creating one common language – caring about one another”***



number of sessions relating to the Residents’ Journey in CareMalta homes.

Some 100 staff members were trained to serve as influencers and deliver the programme to their teams – during one-hour sessions held every month during which a different service value was discussed. Service values range from pre-admission and admission processes, to dealing with a depressed resident.

In 2019, the programme was delivered to all 1,200 CareMalta employees and the results are evident.

“It created a multidisciplinary-team approach within all facilities... We experienced more harmony within the operations of our homes. The team players are becoming more aware of their behaviour and are very enthusiastic to make residents feel better. Staff interaction has also increased which is important,” he adds.

The next step is to expand the programme. In 2020 it will be launched at Head Office.

“I Care is more than just a job; it is a way of life. Being there for others is a very special way to show that, ultimately, this life is about caring. Everyone feels good knowing there are others who care for them,” he says. ■



# The Arkati Foundation

## Financial Statements

### 30 November 2018

#### Income and Expenditure Account

Year ended 30 November 2018

	Note	2018 €	2017 €
<b>Income</b>			
Investment income		11,859	11,038
Donations		56,522	34,140
<b>Gross income</b>		<b>63,381</b>	45,178
Fees and charges		(1,351)	(67)
Tax at source		(1,790)	(1,503)
		<b>65,240</b>	43,608
Allocated to:			
<b>Accumulated funds</b>		<b>32,620</b>	21,804
<b>Distributable fund</b>	4	<b>32,620</b>	21,804
		<b>65,240</b>	43,608

#### Statement of Affairs

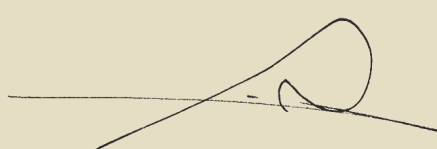
30 November 2018

	Note	2018 €	2017 €
<b>ASSETS AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Financial assets	5	284,824	261,493
<b>Current assets</b>			
Other receivables		3,796	3,460
Cash and cash equivalents	6	81,675	50,196
		<b>85,471</b>	53,655
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>370,295</b>	315,148
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Distributable income		51,845	38,451
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>318,450</b>	276,697
<b>Represented by:-</b>			
Capital Fund	7	11,647	11,647
Distributable fund	4	51,845	38,451
Accumulated fund	8	254,958	226,599
		<b>318,450</b>	276,697

These financial statements were approved by the board members, authorised for issue on 16 July 2019 and signed on its behalf by:



Joe Saliba  
President



Pio Vassallo  
Member







Everything at  
Vassallo Joiners is  
**CUSTOM MADE**

We cater for 'client-specific' furniture designs, handcrafted the old fashioned way, with quality materials and fine workmanship. Whether you are furnishing your home or an office suite, Vassallo Joiners can design and create the ideal furniture for your needs.

**TALK TO US**



The Three Arches, Valletta Road, Mosta MST 9016

T: +356 2143 2333 E: [info@vassallojoiners.com](mailto:info@vassallojoiners.com)



[www.vassallogroupmalta.com](http://www.vassallogroupmalta.com)





The Three Arches, Valletta Road, Mosta MST9016  
Tel: +356 2143 2333 Email: [info@vassallogroupmalta.com](mailto:info@vassallogroupmalta.com)  
[www.vassallogroupmalta.com](http://www.vassallogroupmalta.com)

Find us on 