

Charities gain from a relax-and-eat philosophy

BY JAN GAILLARD
CORRESPONDENT

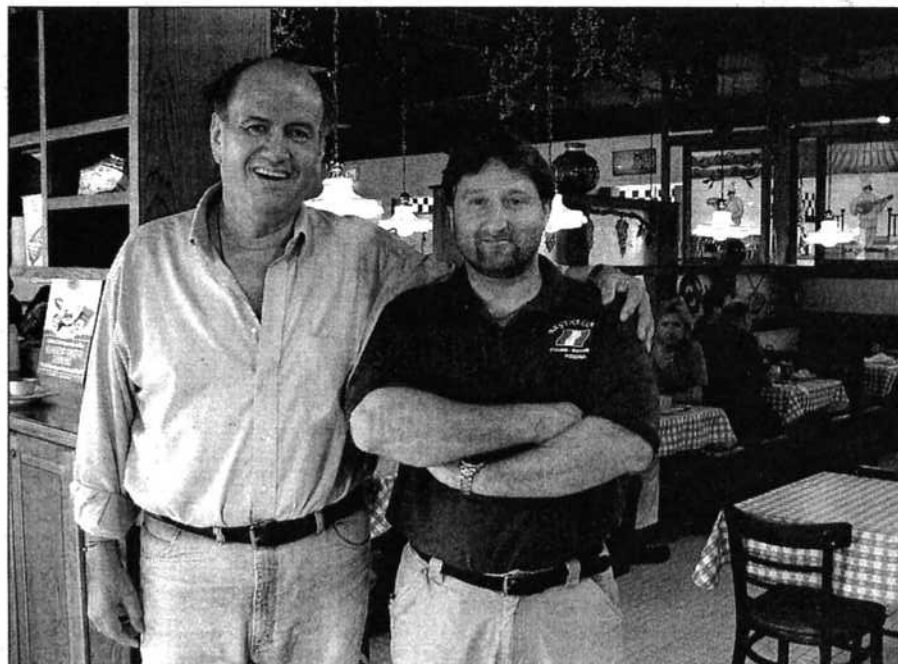
LYNNHAVEN — Life is short, says Ivan Gherardini, so eat long.

Gherardini, owner of Gherardini's Gelato, and Vincenzo Fusaro, owner of Reginella's Italian Ristorante, are promoting the Italian philosophy of long, relaxed dinners with Monday's "Festa dell' Amicizia," or the Festival of Friendship.

Ten percent of the proceeds will be donated to the American Diabetes Association. Tickets are \$57 and include food, wine, live jazz, dancing, singing, games and prizes. There will also be an Italian ceramic auction.

"We decided to develop the combination of foods from Naples, where Vincenzo is from, and from Florence, where I'm from," said Gherardini, whose gelato and sorbetto products are displayed and sold in Reginella's. "We also oriented our gourmet menu to more health conscious recipes."

The partners held two Italian festivals at the restaurant last year, and plan to hold four this year, each targeting



Ivan Gherardini, left, owner of Gherardini's Gelato, and Vincenzo Fusaro, owner of Reginella's Italian Ristorante, will combine talents to hold another "Festa dell' Amicizia," or Festival of Friends, at Reginella's on June 19.

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different charities.

"In Italy, dinner may go on for two or three hours," said Gherardini, a Thalia resident who moved to America eight years ago. "This event is like a feast with friends. We close the restaurant, and we stay here and enjoy a new prospective on dinner, like we do in Italy, with different foods and good wine, and

enjoy the people."

The Festival coincides with the opening of Reginella's Italian Bar. Fusaro, who opened Reginella's eight years ago, said that an Italian coffee bar with desserts, espresso and alcoholic drinks will be a welcome addition for those who want to linger Italian-style.

"Even though we are opening the coffee bar, we want

to keep an Italian family-style atmosphere in the restaurant," Fusaro added. "The festival is something a little different that we do, with special foods. We eat, have fun, laugh, and just enjoy each other. We enjoy an Italian feast of family."

Creative jazz musician Joel Futterman and singer Mario D'Avria will provide Monday's

entertainment. Dishes such as gnocchi alla Sorrentina, or Sorrento-style dumpling pasta, and linguine alla vongole, pasta with white clams, will be served with a multitude of appetizers, desserts and wines.

Little Neck residents Ron and Laura LaSalvia attended two Italian festivals at Reginella's.

"The whole meal is like an event, slow and leisurely," said Ron LaSalvia, who is third-generation Italian. "It's a very enjoyable evening, with good food and good music. It's all very festive, and it makes it real nice to be able to contribute to a charity, too."

■ *Reginella's Italian Ristorante is in Loehmann's Plaza, 4000 Virginia Beach Blvd. Reservations are required for the "Festa dell' Amicizia." Call Fusaro at 498-9770 between 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. to reserve a table. The next "Festa dell' Amicizia" is July 17.*

■ *For more information on Gherardini's Gelato, visit www.gelatogherardini.com.*

■ *Reach Beacon correspondent Jan Gaillard at jangailaird007@yahoo.com.*