

ISSUE 631 NOVEMBER 2026

IACC wishes all of you a

Happy THANKSGIVING



MEMBER EXCLUSIVE

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & YEAR IN REVIEW

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2026 | 12:00PM

The purpose of the annual membership meeting is to receive annual reports, the election of members of the Board of Directors and other business the board of directions deems necessary for the general membership to be aware of.

ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER

VOTE

There are three board seats available. The following members have expressed their interest and will be on the ballot to fill those seats at the meeting.

- **Sharon Patrei**
- **Georgeann Greene**
- **Donna Zumbo**



ALL MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND

MEMBERS ONLY! NO GUESTS

To learn more about these members please visit www.italianamerican.com or use the QR code.



NEWS & EVENTS

1 HAPPY THANKSGIVING

4 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
A special message from Jim Sano President of the Italian American Community Center

5 WOMEN'S LEAGUE

6 UNESCO SITES: MEDICI VILLAS AND GARDENS IN TUSCANY - JEWELS OF THE RENAISSANCE - PART I

11 IACC MEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY

12 PER TUA INFORMAZIONE: GINO BARTALI - THE CYCLIST WHO SAVED LIVES

14 COLUMBUS DAY GRAND GALA: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

16 CARING AND SHARING

17 MANGIA BENE E VIVI BENE!: PASTA E PISELLI IN BIANCO (PASTA & PEAS WHITE)



11/02/26 ~ Monday Grand Italian Buffet – 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
11/02/26 ~ Elementary Italian Language Class – 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
11/05/26 ~ Fall Chair Yoga - Last Class - 6:00 pm
11/09/26 ~ Elementary Italian Language Class - 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
11/11/26 ~ ***VETERANS DAY - OFFICE CLOSED***
11/11/26 ~ Women's League Meeting - 6:00 pm
11/15/26 ~ Annual General Membership Meeting/ Year in Review - 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm
11/16/26 ~ Monday Grand Italian Buffet - 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
11/16/26 ~ Elementary Italian Language Class - Last Class - 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
11/25/26 ~ Thanksgiving Dinner Takeout by Duo at the Dunes
11/26/26 ~ ***HAPPY THANKSGIVING - OFFICE CLOSED***
11/27/26 ~ ***BLACK FRIDAY - OFFICE CLOSED***

12/06/26 ~ IACC Christmas Party & Tree Lighting - 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm
12/12/26 ~ Christmas Time In Little Italy: Arthur Ave Bus Trip - 8:30 am

UPCOMING EVENTS





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As November begins, I sincerely thank Frank Zeoli and the entire Gala Committee. Their hard work and dedication made this year's Gala a great success and a memorable evening of joy and camaraderie.

I'd also like to give a special shout-out to Donna Zumbo for her relentless coordination of another enjoyable and successful season of the Mixed Bocce League. It's a wonderful space where players not only compete in a friendly way but also forge lasting friendships.

With the winter chill fast approaching, the Pavilion and outdoor restrooms have officially closed for the season, paving the way for cozy indoor activities. We encourage our enthusiastic bocce players to bring their own drinking water and use the main building's indoor restrooms.

Once again, we had the honor of hosting the Section 2 High School Blended Bocce Tournament. We proudly served as the home courts for the Albany and Guilderland school districts. What began as a one-day, eight-team event has blossomed into a vibrant three-day tournament featuring over 30 schools. Bocce, a sport deeply rooted in our Italian heritage and passed down through generations, symbolizes much more than competition. It's a game that unites people, nurtures friendships, and strengthens communities. It's fitting that our Community Center can share this cherished Italian tradition with a new generation of student-athletes, with and without disabilities, celebrating the core values of inclusion, sportsmanship, and enduring friendships. Witnessing a sport tied to our culture creating connections and breaking down barriers is incredibly rewarding.

I warmly invite everyone to join us for our Annual Year-in-Review Meeting on Sunday, November 15th. This gathering will allow us to share important organizational updates, hold our Board elections, and reflect on the past year as we look ahead.

In closing, on behalf of the Board and my family, I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving. I hope your travels are safe and that your time with loved ones is filled with joy. May your gatherings be overflowing with delicious food, hearty laughter, and the genuine love that makes this holiday truly unforgettable.

Jim Sano

JIM SANO
ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER
PRESIDENT

DeMarco-Stone
Funeral Home, Inc.
Since 1921
Independent and Family Owned
www.demarcostonefuneralhome.com
demarcostone@nycap.rr.com
5216 Western Turnpike
Guilderland, NY 12084
356-5925
1605 Helderberg Avenue
Rotterdam, NY 12306
355-5770

ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER

I.A.C.C. OFFICERS

PRESIDENT - JIM SANO
(518) 438-4631
VICE PRESIDENT - MARIA LAMORTE
(518) 456-4800
TREASURER - PETE SCAVULLO
(518) 869-8234
SECRETARY - MAGGIE PUTNAM
(518) 767-9301

I.A.C.C. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ANN MARIE LIZZI - (518) 472-0224
DINO BARBATO - (518) 438-8902
TERRY ANDRIANO - (518) 364-4873
FRANK ZEOLI - IACC FOUNDATION - (518) 463-2106
DAVID QUADRINI - IACC FOUNDATION ~ (518) 438-7602
TONY FAZIO - (518) 452-9265

I.A.C.C. COMMITTEE CHAIRS

POOL - JIM SANO
FINANCE - PETE SCAVULLO
MEMBERSHIP- SHARON PATREI
BY-LAWS/POLICIES & PROCEDURE - JIM SANO
HOUSE - DAVID QUADRINI
GRIEVANCE ~ JEANNE SACCA
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES~ FRANK ZEOLI
COLUMBUS DAY GALA~ FRANK ZEOLI

SIAMO QUI

EDITOR - JOAN WALLIS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR - CATALINA ARANGO
ADVERTISING - JIM SANO

IACC OFFICE

HOURS: M-F 9:30AM TO 2:30PM
THERESA LAJOY- OFFICE MANAGER
PHONE # (518) 456-4222
EMAIL: IACCOFFICE@ITALIANAMERICAN.COM

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Hello Ladies,

As Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded of a tradition that began centuries ago with a simple yet powerful idea: giving thanks for the blessings we have received, sharing what we have with others and finding hope and strength in community. While the world around us has changed in countless ways since those early gatherings, the heart of Thanksgiving remains the same.

Today, we live in a world that often feels hurried, divided, and uncertain. We are surrounded by headlines that can weigh heavily on our hearts and make it difficult to see the good that still exists around us. Yet perhaps this is precisely when the spirit of Thanksgiving matters most.

The Women's League met last month in the Caruso Room and had a delicious dinner from Luigi's Deli/Fiorello Importing (special thanks to Mimmo & Michael) and amazing homemade desserts. In typical fashion, we had more than enough food. My colleagues in the NICU were very happy with all the extra food for the next day's lunch. Our next meeting will be held on November 11th at 6 pm in the Caruso Room. We will be celebrating our "Friendsgiving". Our dinner will consist of turkey and all the fixings. If you are planning on attending, please call Mary Lou Marando at (518) 482-8276, no later than Monday, November 9th and let her know what dish you will be bringing. There will be a fee of $10 per person.

Over the summer, Brian Wolter, Vice President of Development, from the Regional Food Bank, spoke to our group regarding the services which they provide. They always need volunteers to help in many different ways. This year, I'm looking for a group of 10-12 ladies to join me and help distribute bags of food at a Regional Food Bank distribution site at the Albany County Board of Elections parking lot at 260 S. Pearl St in Albany on Saturday November 21st from 7 am – 1 pm (may end earlier if all food is distributed). Please contact me ASAP if you're interested in helping in this endeavor and providing those struggling with food insecurity a meal for the holiday.

As our year is coming to an end, it is time for elections in December. As required by the by laws, the slate of officers chosen by the Nominating Committee are:

President - **Georgeann Greene**
Vice President - **Maria LaMorte**
Secretary - **Annette D'Auge**
Treasurer – **Mary Lou Marando**

If there is anyone else interested in running for one of these positions, please submit your request to our current secretary, Annette D'Auge before the December 9th meeting.

During this Thanksgiving season, may we look beyond what divides us and recognize what unites us. May we be grateful not only for what we have, but also for what we can offer every day of the year. For in the end, Thanksgiving is more than just a day on the calendar. It is a way of living, with grateful hearts, open hands and a willingness to make the world a little brighter for others.

25 days till Thanksgiving
54 days till Christmas
221 days till Pool opening



Georgeann Greene
President



CHAIR YOGA IS BEGINNING A NEW 8 WEEK SESSION

This class is enjoyed by so many and it's returning for an 8-week fall session. Classes will be on Thursdays at 6:00 pm.

They begin on **September 17th to November 5th**. The class is held upstairs in the Carusso Room. Classes are open to men and women.

The price is $60 for 8 weeks or $10 to drop in for a class. Please call the membership office at 456-IACC (4222) to sign up.

MEDICI VILLAS AND GARDENS IN TUSCANY

Jewels of the Renaissance PART I

BY JIM SANO



VILLA LA PRETAIA

The Medici villas are a remarkable collection of architectural and horticultural masterpieces across the Tuscan countryside. The House of Medici, known for its association with the Italian Renaissance, originated from the rural Mugello region near Florence and rose to prominence in the 15th century. Initially acquiring properties for agricultural purposes, their influence grew significantly with the establishment of the Medici Bank by Giovanni di Bicci de Medici in 1397. His son, Cosimo il Vecchio, further solidified their power, becoming the de facto ruler of Florence by the mid-15th century.

The villas, built between the 15th and 17th centuries by the influential Medici family, showcased their power and wealth, offered leisure, and served as centers of agricultural activity. They featured courtyards, balconies, and gardens, uniquely blending art, nature, and power. These elegant summer homes, owned by the Medici family until the early 18th century, are prime examples of Florentine Renaissance architecture. As the Medici family became prominent in Florence, their villas evolved from simple farmhouses into sophisticated residences. They became symbols of their wealth and influence, showcasing the family's patronage of the arts and sciences.

The Medici villas pioneered a new concept of country living, blending architecture harmoniously with the surrounding landscape. They incorporated elements of classical architecture, innovative gardens, and advanced agricultural techniques. These villas became centers of intellectual and artistic activity, hosting renowned thinkers, artists, and scholars. They played a crucial role in shaping the Renaissance ideals of humanism and the appreciation of nature.

In recognition of their exceptional cultural and historical significance, the Medici villas were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2013. This prestigious designation highlights their enduring impact on European architecture, landscape design, and the Renaissance. The UNESCO site designation includes twelve Medici villas and two gardens.

The first Medici villas were Villa del Trebbio and Villa di Cafaggiolo, fortified houses built in the 14th century in the Mugello region, the Medici family's original home. In the 15th century, Cosimo de' Medici had Michelozzo design villas at Careggi and Fiesole, which included courtyards, balconies, and gardens. Florence eventually became surrounded by Medici villas, with more in distant parts of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. By the end of the 16th century, there were at least 16 major estates and another 11 of secondary importance, along with many farms and hunting lodges throughout the region. In 2013, twelve Medici villas across the Tuscan landscape, Boboli Gardens, and the Pratolino Gardens were designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They showcase the Medici family's extensive architectural and cultural influence on European culture through their patronage.

Each significant member of the Medici family owned an estate, with the duke moving from house to house. The villa became a small version of the Medici court when the Medici were in residence. For hunting, the duke



could visit the Villa del Trebbio, Villa di Cafaggiolo, or Villa di Pratolino, stay at the Villa dell'Ambrogiana in the spring, and move to the Villa di Artimino to spend the summer in its cooler elevated position. The Medici Villas and Gardens included in the World Heritage site are Villa di Careggi, Villa di Castello, Villa della Petraia, Giardino di Boboli (Boboli Gardens), Villa del Poggio Imperiale in Florence, Villa di Cafaggiolo in Barberino di Mugello, Villa de Il Trebbio in San Piero a Sieve, Villa Medici/ Belcanto in Fiesole, Villa di Cerreto Guidi, Giardino di Pratolino in Vaglia, Villa di Poggio a Caiano, Villa di Artimino, Palazzo di Seravezza, and Villa La Magia in Quarrata. The Medici family also owned 11 other minor villas throughout Tuscany: Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Palazzo Vecchio, Palazzo Pitti, Casino di San Marco in Florence, and Villa Medici in Rome.

The family's first significant palace, Palazzo Medici, was commissioned by Cosimo around 1444. Designed by Michelozzo di Bartolomeo, it featured a characteristic stone facade and a colonnaded courtyard, reflecting the family's growing power and wealth. Despite its humble beginnings, the Medici family leveraged its financial success to become one of Europe's wealthiest.

Cosimo il Vecchio's patronage of the arts was exemplary. Artists like Benozzo Gozzoli adorned Palazzo Medici with masterpieces, such as the frescoes in the Magi Chapel, celebrating the Medici family's prestige. Cosimo's death in 1464 marked a transition, but his legacy endured through his son, Piero il Gottoso, and his grandsons, particularly Lorenzo il Magnifico.

Under Lorenzo's rule, Palazzo Medici flourished as a cultural hub. It hosted luminaries of the Renaissance, such as Michelangelo and Botticelli, whose works adorned its halls. Lorenzo's death in 1492 led to a period of decline for the Medici, culminating in their expulsion from Florence in 1494 under the influence of Girolamo Savonarola's anti-Medici regime.

Despite this setback, the Medici returned to power in 1512, reclaiming Palazzo Medici. Over time, however, the family shifted their primary residence to Palazzo Vecchio and later Palazzo Pitti, marking a change in Florence's political and cultural landscape. Palazzo Medici evolved, becoming Palazzo Medici Riccardi after it was sold to the Riccardi family in 1659, who renovated it in a Baroque style.

After Gian Gastone de' Medici died in 1737, Francis, Duke of Lorraine, acquired the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Medici's assets, including their villas. The villas were neglected for several years until Leopold I inherited the duchy in 1765 and decided to sell many of them. Tuscany was eventually absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1860, leading to the sale of most Medici villas. Some are now museums, while others serve as institutions or private event venues.

The story of the Medici family and their palaces reflects not only their rise to power and cultural patronage but also the evolving dynamics of Renaissance Florence. Their legacy as patrons of the arts and influential political figures continues to resonate through the centuries, leaving an indelible mark on Italian history and the Renaissance era.

Villa La Petraia is one of the most beautiful Medici villas. It is located in Castello's hamlet just outside Florence. The villa was originally an ancient fortress of early medieval origin. It offers breathtaking views over its expansive Italian garden and the Renaissance city of Florence from its elevated position. The villa features a splendid Italian garden and richly decorated interior, showcasing stunning examples of Mannerist architecture. The Brunelleschi family acquired the villa and sold it to Palla Strozzi in 1422. In the 16th century, Villa La Petraia became the property of the Salutati family and was later sold to Cosimo I de' Medici in 1544. Cosimo gifted the villa to his son, Cardinal Ferdinando, in 1568. Extensive excavation work between 1588 and 1598 transformed the site's "stony" character (hence the name Petraia, meaning "full of stones") into a dramatic sequence of terraces dominated by the massive main building. Cardinal Ferdinando, who became Grand Duke in 1587, transformed the villa into a princely residence, focusing on the central tower and creating three terraces in the surrounding park. The first terrace had dwarf fruit trees; the second, flower beds; and the third, elliptical areas with general and citrus trees. The ballroom was decorated with frescoes by Cosimo Gaddi and Volterrano, depicting the exploits of the Medici family.

Despite changes in the 18th and 19th centuries, the garden retains the original 16th-century geometric layout designed by Ferdinando I de Medici, as documented in Giusto Utens' painting series "Villa in a Lunette" (1599/1602). A new permanent gallery at Villa La Petraia opened in 2014 to display Giusto Utens's 14 surviving paintings of Medici villas.

In 1609, ownership of Petraia passed to Don Lorenzo de' Medici, who continued to enhance the property. In 1622, the tower was reinforced, and a cycle of frescoes by Baldassarre Franceschini (Volterrano) was added in the central courtyard, celebrating the Medici family and the knights of Santo Stefano.

The villa remained in the Medici family's possession until their extinction. It then passed to the Grand Dukes of Habsburg-Lorraine. Villa della Petraia has always served as a residence, hosting notable figures from the Medici family (such as Don Lorenzo and Cosimo III), the Lorraines (Leopold II), and the Savoys, Italy's royal family (Vittorio Emanuele II and his wife, Rosa Vercelliana). In 1860, the estate became the property of the House of Savoy and became one of Victor Emmanuel II's favorite residences. The Petraia villa was transferred to the Italian state in 1919 and is now a museum. It is a testament to the architectural and artistic patronage of the Medici and other influential families in Florence, preserving its historical and cultural significance for visitors to explore.



The Villa di Castello, also known as Villa Reale, is a historic complex featuring an elegant villa and renowned Italian gardens near Florence. It was a favored retreat of Cosimo I de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, in the 16th century. Acquired by Giovanni and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici in 1477, the villa played a significant role in Medici history, with Humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino educating Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco there and Botticelli creating The Birth of Venus and Allegory of Spring for the villa. The villa's architecture evolved from a 12th-century defensive tower, undergoing Renaissance renovations under Cosimo I and Ferdinand I, with contributions from architects like Niccolò Pericoli (Tribolo), Giorgio Vasari, and Bernardo Buontalenti.

The garden, designed by Tribolo in 1538, is a prototype of the 16th-century Italian garden and influenced the Boboli Gardens. It includes terraces adorned with classical sculptures, an advanced hydraulic system, the famous Fountain of Hercules and Antaeus, the Cave of the Animals, and a unique collection of citrus plants that are over 300 years old. The garden also includes a medicinal herb garden with rare species, and was later, in the 19th century, transformed in parts into an English-style park. Additionally, two secret gardens near the Limonaie are for wintering citrus plants.

After being acquired by the Lorraine family, the villa's garden was redesigned, and several interior rooms were refurbished. It was later taken over by the Savoy family, who donated it to the Opera dei Combattenti after World War I. In 1924, it became state property. Since 1974, the villa has been the home of the Accademia della Crusca and, since 2001, the CNR-Opera Nazionale del Vocabolario. The garden was transformed into a National Museum in 1984, showcasing its historical significance. Castello remains a cultural institution open to the public, highlighting its unique heritage and significance in Italian history.

The Medici Villa of Poggio Imperiale in Florence, originally a medieval castle owned by the Baroncelli, Pandolfini, and Salviati families, is located on the hill of Arcetri. In 1565 Cosimo I de' Medici confiscated it from the Salviati family for his daughter Isabella.

Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena of Austria purchased it in 1622, transforming it into a luxurious suburban residence with renovations by architect Giulio Parigi, including a central cloister and gardens. Renamed "Poggio Imperiale" in 1624, the villa hosted figures such as Mozart and Queen Maria José, and played a role in significant events, including Grand Duke Peter Leopold's abolition of torture and the death penalty.

In 1681, Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere hired



Villa di Castello







architects Diacinto Maria Marmi and Ferdinando Tacca to enhance the grandeur of the villa. In the 17th and 18th centuries, architects such as Giovan Battista Foggini and Niccolò Gasparo Maria Paoletti expanded and beautified the villa with stuccos, frescoes, and picturesque gardens. Subsequent owners, including Maria Luigia di Borbone and Elisa Baciocchi (Napoleon's sister), transformed the villa into a Neo-Classical estate. In the 1700s, the Lorraine family further expanded the villa, and Grand Duke Leopold chose it as his permanent residence for its beauty and strategic location. Leopold selected architect Niccolò Gaspero to make significant modifications, transforming the villa's layout into a large rectangular structure with symmetrical courtyards. Notably, Mozart held his only concert in Florence in 1770.

In 1864, just before Florence became Italy's capital, the Villa Medici Poggio Imperiale was ceded to the Female Boarding School of the Santissima Annunziata, which still occupies it today. The villa underwent restoration between 1972 and 1975, balancing ancient structures with modern school needs. This historic girls' school opens some of its frescoed rooms, Italian garden, and other areas to the public, preserving its Renaissance legacy and cultural heritage.

The Villa Medici Careggi, located north of Florence, was one of the first Medici villas. Initially, it functioned as a farm to support the family. On June 17, 1417, Lorenzo di Giovanni di Bicci de Medici purchased it from the Lippi family for 800 gold florins.

In 1457, Cosimo the Elder commissioned Michelozzo to make significant expansions and enhancements to the villa. These improvements included integrating numerous farms surrounding the primary residence.



The property's substantial size extended to the borders of the Trebbio and Cafaggiolo villas in Mugello. Michelozzo also renovated the villa by adding trapezoid courts and loggias. Following Cosimo the Elder's death in 1464, his grandson, "Lorenzo the Magnificent," assumed leadership of the Medici family.

Lorenzo the Magnificent favored this residence, which became a center for cultural and artistic activities. It notably housed the headquarters of the Platonic Academy. Part of the garden served as a meeting place for the Platonic Academy, which Marsilio Ficino, the owner of a farm on the property, founded. The villa was a gathering place for intellectuals, philosophers, and artists. Notable residents included Donatello, a friend of Cosimo the Elder, and Poliziano. Regular guests included Leon Battista Alberti, Michelozzo, Pico della Mirandola, and Michelangelo. In the sixteenth century, Cosimo I had it decorated by artists such as Pontormo and Bronzino. In the seventeenth century, Cardinal Carlo de' Medici undertook a restyling. The garden, surrounded by a wall and overlooked by loggias, featured a mix of local and exotic plant species. Architects Giulio and Alfonso Parigi, who also worked in the Boboli Gardens, restored the garden.

In 1492, Lorenzo the Magnificent died. The death marked the Medici family's decline as Florence fell under the control of the Sforzas, and their opponents burned and sacked the house. Alessandro de' Medici regained power and called in Pontormo and Bronzino to restore the mansion, but it gradually lost its importance. The works of Verrocchio, the Putto with the Dolphin, and the Resurrection in terracotta were moved from the Villa Careggi into the Palazzo Vecchio.

In the 16th century, the Medici family regained power in Florence, and Villa Medicea di Careggi again became a center of opulence and intellectual activity. The gardens were redesigned and expanded, and the villa's interior was adorned with exquisite frescoes and furnishings.

In the 17th century, the Medici family's influence began to decline, and Villa Medicea di Careggi fell into disrepair. In the 18th century, the villa was sold to



private owners, and much of its original grandeur was lost. The villa continued to deteriorate over the years until it was purchased by the wealthy English geologist Francis Sloane in 1848. He transformed the garden into a romantic park with exotic trees and various citrus fruits. After Sloane's death, the property changed hands multiple times before being acquired. In 1936, the house passed to the Hospital of Florence's Administration.

Finally, in 2004, the Region of Tuscany acquired Careggi. It converted it into the headquarters of the European Landscape Centre, recognizing its historical significance and positioning it as a modern hub for landscape preservation and appreciation.

The Villa of Cerreto Guidi is one of the most beautiful and best-preserved Medici villas in the heart of Tuscany, a few kilometers from Florence. This noble residence, built between 1564 and 1567, is a true Renaissance masterpiece, combining architectural elements of great elegance with an intimate atmosphere. Commissioned by Cosimo I de' Medici, the villa was designed by some of the most important architects of the time, including Bernardo Buontalenti, Alfonso Parigi il Vecchio, and Davide Fortini. Its construction was part of a broader project to enhance the territory, aimed at transforming Cerreto Guidi into a hunting residence, territorial garrison, and strategic control point. The villa is situated on a hilltop near the Fucecchio Marsh, a once-abundant wetland rich in wild game.

The villa has a simple and elegant exterior, featuring a pietra serena portal and regular windows. The Italian Garden has geometric flowerbeds and fountains, perfect for a peaceful stroll. The villa has evolved into a significant cultural and historical site, reflecting Medici power through its architecture. The villa is now an imposing two-story structure with a large pavilion roof and a façade. The rear facade features a portico with rounded arches on unadorned pillars. The most notable feature of the villa's architecture is the "scalera," a unique flight of brick zigzag stairs leading to the entrance. The stairs create a striking contrast with the villa's facade and serve a practical function as access to the stables below and as a natural support for the villa's elevation. These symmetrical grand stairway access ramps, known as "Medici bridges," are attributed to Bernardo Buontalenti, a prominent architect and designer favored by the Medici family. He played a pivotal role in the villa's architectural design and was an important architect of the Mannerist period. The villa's interior floor plan centers around a central hall, with stairs leading to the upper floor. The villa retains many original decorations, including stuccos, frescoes, and terracotta floors. Notable areas include the Great Hall with its coffered ceiling and the Chapel, which features frescoes by Bernardino Poccetti.

The villa gained fame due to the tragic death of Isabella de' Medici, who died there in July 1576. Contrary to the legend that her jealous husband, Paolo Giordano I Orsini, murdered her, recent studies suggest she died from severe renal obstruction. The villa, which later belonged to various members of the Medici family, was transformed into a more residential space under Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici in 1671.

After the Medici family line became extinct in 1738, the villa passed to the Lorraine family and later to private individuals. During World War II, the villa served as a military garrison and suffered looting. After changing hands several times, the villa was purchased by engineer Galliano Boldrini, a native of Cerreto Guidi, who donated it to the Italian State in 1969 to be used as a National Museum. It is notable for being one of the few Medici villas permanently open to the public since 1978, offering guided tours of the villa and its adjacent gardens and hosting cultural events and exhibitions.

In 2002, it became home to the Historical Museum of Hunting and the Territory. The museum narrates the story of hunting and the enduring relationship between humanity and nature. It features a collection of 17th to 19th century hunting and shooting equipment. The first floor showcases portraits of the Medici family, weapons, tapestries, and furniture.

THIS ARTICLE WILL CONTNUE IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

IACC MEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY

DECEMBER 6, 2026
4:00PM TO 6:30PM

ENJOY A BUFFET STYLE DINNER, DESSERT, CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND HOLIDAY FUN!

FREE FOR MEMBERS

GUESTS OF MEMBERS ARE WELCOME

CHILDREN | $15.00 ❄ ADULTS | $25.00

to RSVP call 518-456-4222 or online at

www.italianamerican.com

MEMBER EXCLUSIVE

BY JOE SANO

Gino Bartali

THE CYCLIST WHO SAVED LIVES



Gino Bartali (1914–2000) is remembered not only as one of Italy's greatest road cyclists, but also as a man whose wartime actions helped Jews escape Nazi persecution.

Bartali won the Giro d'Italia in 1936, 1937, and 1946. He won the Tour DeFrance race in 1938 and again in 1948, setting a record for the longest interval between victories. Known as "Gino the Pious" and the "Giant of the Mountains," he became admired for both his extraordinary athletic achievements and his deeply held Catholic faith.

During World War II, however, Bartali took part in a dangerous secret effort to help Jews persecuted under the Nazi occupation of Italy. He used his cycling career as a cover, disguising his missions as training rides. Hidden inside his bicycle frame and handlebars were forged identity documents, photographs, and other materials used by an underground rescue network.

One of the central figures in this network was Giorgio Nissim, a Jewish accountant from Pisa who was associated with DELASEM, an organization dedicated to helping Jews escape persecution. After the network in Tuscany was exposed in 1943, Nissim helped rebuild the rescue operation with the support of figures including Archbishop Elia Dalla Costa of Florence, Archbishop Pietro Boetto of Genoa, Franciscan friars in Assisi, and others. One of these "others" was Gino Bartali.

The network ultimately helped hundreds of people survive.

Bartali played a particularly important role by traveling between Florence, Assisi, and other locations. Nissim and his collaborators could produce forged identity papers, but they needed photographs of the people they were assisting. Bartali cycled to Franciscan convents and other hiding places to collect photographs and deliver them to the network.



His fame provided an unusual form of protection. Bartali was a nationally celebrated athlete, and his recognizable racing jersey and bicycle helped him appear to be nothing more than a cyclist out on a training





ride. Even when traveling through areas controlled by Fascist and German forces, his celebrity could make authorities reluctant to interfere with him. He was often photographed with the occupiers who remained clueless of what was stuffed into his bicycle frame.

Bartali's work nevertheless placed him in serious danger. He was eventually taken to Florence, where he was interrogated by the German Sicherheitsdienst and Italian Fascist forces. Despite threats against his life, he revealed nothing about the people involved in the rescue network. He was released unharmed.

During this time of Nazi occupation and Fascist collaboration, he sheltered a Jewish family in his home, hiding them in his cellar and helping protect them from deportation. Another account describes him assisting Jewish refugees attempting to reach safety near the Swiss border, using a wagon with a concealed compartment while telling patrols that it contained his cycling equipment.

For decades, Bartali rarely spoke about his wartime activities. He believed that helping others was not something to boast about. His modesty meant that much of the story emerged only after his death in 2000, when the sons of Giorgio Nissim discovered their father's wartime diaries, which described Bartali's involvement in the rescue network.

Bartali's wartime story later reached a wider audience through literature, television, and a documentary film. The 1978 novel *The Assisi Underground: The Priest Who Rescued Jews* and its 1985 American television adaptation drew on accounts associated with Father Rufino Niccacci. His story was also featured in the 2014 documentary *My Italian Secret: The Forgotten Heroes*. Aili and Andres McConnon further explored his life in their 2012 book *Road to Valor*. Currently a new Hollywood movie featuring Miles Teller as Bartali has been "green lit" for production.

In 2013, Yad Vashem recognized Bartali as a ***Righteous Among the Nations***, an honor given to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

There are some historians who have questioned aspects of the available documentation of Bartali's experiences and exploits. However, Yad Vashem's investigation strongly rejected any suggestion that Bartali's rescue activities were fabricated.

What is clear is that Bartali's life extended far beyond his celebrated cycling career. During the war, he used his fame, mobility, and courage in ways that placed him at considerable personal risk. His story is now remembered as an example of how an internationally known athlete secretly became involved in the effort to protect people targeted by Nazi persecution.



As Bartali reportedly told his son years later when discussing his wartime actions:

"One does these things and then… that's that!"

❑



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER!

COLUMBUS DAY GRAND GALA

Italian American Community Center Celebrates Its 2026 Columbus Day Grand Gala. An evening filled with Italian pride, friendship, delicious food, wonderful music, and plenty of dancing!

The Italian American Community Center celebrated its 2026 Columbus Day Grand Gala on Saturday, October 17th, bringing together members, families, friends, and supporters of the IACC for an unforgettable evening honoring Italian American heritage, tradition, and community.

The evening was a wonderful celebration of everything that makes the IACC so special. From the moment guests arrived, the atmosphere was filled with warmth, laughter, and friendship. **And what would an Italian celebration be without great food, good wine, music, and dancing?**

Guests enjoyed a first-class cocktail hour, followed by a delicious multicourse dinner featuring pasta, salad, and a surf-and-turf entrée. The evening's culinary experience was made even sweeter by Bella Napoli's desserts. Duo at the Dunes outdid themselves this year.

With plenty of food, wine, and conversation, the evening truly reflected the Italian tradition of bringing people together around the table. As the evening continued, the music filled the room, and the dance floor came alive! Guests danced, laughed, and celebrated well into the evening.

While the evening was filled with celebration, the heart of the Columbus Day Grand Gala was the recognition of individuals whose dedication, service, and contributions have made a lasting impact on the Italian American community.

The IACC was proud to recognize its **2026 honorees:**

- **Tom Nardacci** – Italian American of the Year
- **Richard Jack Sr.** – Italian Spirit Award
- **Nancy Zeoli** – IACC President's Award
- **Margaret Putnam** – Pasquale Tirino Service Award
- **Terry Andriano** – Cuore de Oro Award

Each of these individuals represents the values that have long defined the Italian American community: hard work, generosity, service, family, and a commitment to helping others.
Their contributions remind us that preserving our heritage is more than remembering the past. It is about the people who continue to strengthen our community, support our traditions, and ensure that future generations understand and appreciate their Italian American roots. We congratulate each of our honorees and thank them for the difference they have made in the lives of so many.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the **Regional Food Bank**, our dinner sponsor; **DeCrescente Distributing**, our cocktail hour sponsor; and **Bella Napoli**, which provided the delicious desserts enjoyed throughout the evening.

We also thank the businesses, organizations, and individuals who contributed to our silent auction, as well as everyone who generously sponsored the event.

A special thank you goes to the Gala Committee, Duo at the Dunes staff, and everyone who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the evening such a memorable occasion.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR NEXT YEAR YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS IT – OCTOBER 16, 2027.



















CARING & SHARING

Olga Anton
Lisa Armao
Diane Biernacki
John Bonnano
Rachel Cameron
Karen Campbell
Guy Criscione
Donna Dolan
Michael Gallucci
Carlene Garrow
Nick Hrimatopoulos
Maria Iannucci
Lynn Indelicato
Kirsten Ippolito
Sofeya Lascaris
Natalina Latina
Theresa Mainella
Mary Lou Marando
Ronald Milkins
Lindsey Mooney
Linda Padula
Angela Pauley
Matthew Pezzula
Jeffrey Petersen
Nancy Piaggione
Rocky Piaggione
Theresa Portelli
Stephanie Primero
Gail Richmond
Scott Roberts
Mary Rozak
Carmen Sposito
Catherine Stack
Kathy Stellrecht
Mariann Stelmaszyk
Barbara Trimarchi
Suzanne Wall
Karen Wilson

NOVEMBER *Birthdays*

WELCOME *new members*

Angelina & Raymond Haines, Jr.
Dominic & Darleen Mainella
Theresa Mainella
Mel Moniz
Carmen & Dominick Sposito

BUY OR SELL
YOUR HOUSE
WITHOUT AGITA



IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT MAKING A MOVE, I'D BE HONORED TO HELP!



MICHELE SANO PAUL
LICENSED REAL ESTATE SALESPERSON

(518) 466-9988
MSANO-PAUL@JPAULREALTYGROUP.COM



Pasta e Piselli in Bianco
(Pasta & Peas White)









Pasta e Piselli is a classic Italian comfort food that has been passed down through generations. This simple, delicious dish combines tender peas, pasta, onions, garlic, olive oil, and Parmesan cheese to create a flavorful meal without tomato sauce.

Traditionally prepared in Italian households, especially in Southern Italy, Pasta e Piselli was an economical meal made with ingredients commonly found in the kitchen. Every family had its own version, but the secret was always allowing the peas to simmer slowly to develop their natural sweetness.

This recipe was one my grandfather, who was from the Campania region of Italy, made often; my grandmother was from Calabria, and she would make it with tomato sauce.

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES | COOK TIME: 25 - 30 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

- One pound of ditalini or elbow pasta
- Two 15 oz cans of peas (drained); you can use frozen peas too
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- One medium onion (finely chopped)
- Three cloves of garlic (minced)
- 1 cup of water
- 1 cup of pasta water
- 1 cup Pecorino Romano or Parmesan cheese (freshly grated)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large, deep skillet or saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and cook for approximately 5 – 7 minutes until soft and translucent. Add the minced garlic and cook for another minute, being careful not to let it brown.
2. Add the peas to the pan and stir to coat them with the olive oil, onions, and garlic. Season with salt and black pepper. Add 1 cup of water and allow the peas to simmer gently for 10 – 15 minutes until tender.
3. Bring a large pot of salt water to a boil. Cook the pasta until it is just short of al dente. Before draining, reserve 1 – 2 cups of the starchy pasta water.
4. Add the drained pasta directly to the skillet with the peas. Pour in approximately 1 cup of reserved pasta water and stir gently over medium-low heat. Continue cooking for 2 – 3 minutes, adding additional pasta water as needed. The starch from the pasta will combine with the olive oil and broth to create a light, silky sauce.
5. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the grated Pecorino Romano or Parmesan cheese.
6. Toss until everything is well combined. Add more pasta water if necessary to keep the pasta moist and creamy.
7. Finish with additional grated cheese, freshly ground black pepper, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

Serve immediately with crusty Italian bread.

The Heritage Group
The Right Insurance... A Better Experience
1184 Troy Schenectady Road Latham, NY 12110 (518) 782-0001 www.heritagegrp.com

ALL SAFE SELF STORAGE
1627 Route 9W, Selkirk, NY 12158
FAMILY OWNED AND OPERATED SINCE 2005
BEST RATES - ALL SIZE UNITS
CALL NOW
518-265-4248 or 518-767-0400
24 HOUR SECURITY 24 HOUR ACCESS
Unit Size/Cost
5x5 $40 5x10 $50 10x10 $100
10x15 $120 10x20 $140 10x30 $225


Morgan Linen Service
Providing for the textile needs of your business.
Serving the Capital and Lower Hudson Valley Regions since 1887
(518) 465-3337
Visit us on the web at www.morganlinenservice.com!

The Original
FIORELLO IMPORTING CO.
LUIGI'S DELI
1182 Western Avenue,
Albany, New York
518.489.7067
luigisfiorello.com
Try our Homemade Italian Sausage.
Hot and Cold Subs & Wraps
Pizza, Take Out Dinners, Special Party Platters
Extra Long Heroes and so much more...
Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 7:00pm
Saturday, 8:30am to 6:00pm
Sunday, 8:30am - 1:00pm



Roman Jewels

30th Anniversary

Offering the area's **most honest** prices on gold, silver, coins and jewlery

RomanJewels.com

1717 Western Ave 518.459.6331

FAMILY OWNED

Roman Jewels

ROMANJEWELS.COM

SHOP ONLINE!

Celebrating

32

Years in Business

WE BUY AND SELL: GOLD · SILVER · COINS
DIAMONDS · ESTATE JEWELRY · AND MORE!

Visit Our New Location!

1717 WESTERN AVENUE
ALBANY, NY 12203 · 518-459-6331
CALL OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE
FOR STORE HOURS

ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER

I.A.C.C. FOUNDATION

THE ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER AND THE I.A.C.C. FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

CONTACT US

PHONE: (518) 456-4222

WEBSITE: WWW.ITALIANAMERICAN.COM

EMAIL: MEMBERSHIP@ITALIANAMERICAN.COM

ADDRESS: 257 WASHINGTON AVENUE EXT, ALBANY NY 12205

CONNECT WITH US

FACEBOOK: FACEBOOK.COM/THEIACC

TWITTER: TWITTER.COM/IACC_ALBANY_NY

PINTEREST: PINTEREST.COM/IACC_ALBANY_NY

EVENTBRITE: IACCALBANYNY.EVENTBRITE.COM

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

JOIN THE ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER







The Italian-American Community Center, founded in 1971, is an organization dedicated to serving everyone who loves Italian culture and heritage.

As a member of the IACC, you'll enjoy exclusive access to diverse events and activities, special discounts, promotional opportunities, and the latest news about the Italian-American culture and community.

(Call (518) 456-42222 To Join Today!