

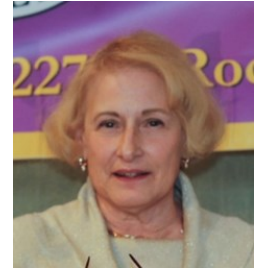


The Roar of the Lion

Marisa Rubé Przepiora, editor
July 2023 Edition

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Summer! Whatever you've got planned for these all-too-brief months make sure to enjoy every moment. Before we realize it, the days will get shorter, the leaves will turn gold and crimson, and the breezes will be cooler. But for now, is the time to spend with family and friends outdoors.



I hope our Members' Picnic is on your calendar for August 5th at the Quinzi Lodge in East Rochester. Homemade sausage will be our specialty along with all the great foods brought to share. Last year we had a great time, and the weather was perfect!



Yesterday, we presented Sandy Meleca with the very first Vincent Lombardi Lodge #2270 President Bene Emeritus Award. As you recall, Sandy's presidency was cut short when she had a stroke. Even before being elected president, she was very active and instrumental in the workings of our Lodge. Under normal circumstances, this award would be given out at our Heritage Dinner in October, but Sandy and Tom's daughter, Cathy, was visiting this weekend, and it was the perfect time to give this award. Along with Cathy and her boyfriend, Christian, Tom Jr. was able to drive in from Buffalo, plus many of Sandy's and Tom's family were present.

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Sandy and daughter Cathy



Sandy addressing us with her antics!



Sandy with Frank and Angela Giancaterin, brother and sister in law

Thank you to all our members who were able to come and make this special for Sandy.

Early in June, the New York State Grand Lodge held its 115th State Convention and a new president and executive board were elected. Thank you to our delegates and attendees: Kitty DiNicola, Ron Santoli, Joe and Nancy Rube, Marisa and Chris Przepiora, Luigi DiFilippo, and Vince Giannantonio for giving up their weekend and spending time sitting in meetings listening to the wonderful results of our charities and committees were able to accomplish this past year. The convention was dedicated to President Michele Cangiano Ment, who passed away shortly before the convention. I have served on the State Scholarship committee for several years, and scholarship was especially important to President Michele, who served as the chair for more than 25 years prior to being NYS Grand Lodge President. Scholarship is truly her legacy.

I hope everyone will be on the lookout for some terrific events happening at our Lodge in the second half of 2023 and moving into 2024.

Take care and God bless,
Marjorie

2023 Vincent Lombardi Lodge Calendar

July 6th, 6:30pm: Council Meeting

July 13th, 7pm: Scholarship Awards Night (Eyer Building, East Rochester)

August 3rd, 6:30pm: Council Meeting

August 5th: Members Picnic (Quinzi Lodge - Eyer Park, East Rochester)

August 10th, 7pm: General Assembly Meeting

September 7th, 6:30pm: Council Meeting

September 13th, 7pm: General Assembly Meeting

October 5th, 6:30pm: Council Meeting
October 12th, 7pm: General Assembly Meeting

October 15th: Traditional Sunday Dinner (Legacy at Maiden Lane)

October 27th: Italian American Heritage Dinner (Webster Country Club)

November 2nd, 6:30pm: Council Meeting

November 9th, 7pm: General Assembly Meeting

Papa Antolini Turkey Raffle: TBA

December 7th, 6:30pm: Council Meeting

December 14th, 7pm: Holiday Gathering



***Members' Picnic Reminder
Saturday, August 5th
1:00 to 5:00 PM
Quinzi Lodge
Eyer Park, East Rochester***

Join us for great food, raffles, and great company. Featuring our famous homemade sausage. For more info see attached flyer



VINCENT LOMBARDI LODGE #2270
ORDER SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ITALY IN AMERICA
SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARDS NIGHT
JULY 13, 2023

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| I | Call the meeting to order | Sr. Marjorie Focarazzo |
| II | Roll Call of Officers
Excused: Sandy Meleca | Sr. Pat Bartholomew |
| III | Principles of the Order | Br. Jeremy DiFilippo |
| IV | Prayer | Sr. Pat Galante |
| V | Pledge of Allegiance | |
| VI | Moment of Silence | |
| VII | Approval for Membership
John Julian | |
| VIII | Official business of the Lodge will be suspended for our scholarships and awards presentation | |
| | Scholarship Committee: Marisa Przepiora, Chair; Melissa Distaffen; Ed Groszewski; and Maurice Palucci | |
| | Vincent Lombardi Lodge #2270 Scholarships | Presented by Sr. Marisa Przepiora |
| | Vincent Lombardi Lodge Scholarship - \$1500 – Emma Rosato
Vincent Lombardi Lodge Scholarship - \$1000 – Joshua DiNicola
Past Honorees Scholarship - \$1000 – Evan Stanley
Past Honorees Scholarship - \$1500 – Madelyn Brunswick
Rubé Family Scholarship in Honor of Jennifer Rubé - \$1500 – Emily DiCesare
Joseph Darryl DiStaffen Scholarship - \$1500 - Gabriella Brongro | |
| | New York State Grand Lodge Scholarships | Recipients announced by Sr. Marjorie Focarazzo |
| | Adeline & Nicholas P. DiNapoli Scholarship - \$1500 – Alexander Bruno | |



Picnic

**Vincent Lombardi Lodge #2270
Members' Appreciation Picnic
Saturday, August 5th 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm
Quinzi Lodge in Eyer Park, East Rochester**

Please remit the following by July 24th, so we know how much food to prepare and/or purchase. The council will provide in the way of dishes: Baked ziti, eggplant parm, greens-n-beans, large tossed green salad, Sicilian Caponata, East Utica Greens, pasta salad, and mac-n-cheese.

Also supplied will be: homemade sausage, beverages, hotdogs, buns, condiments, paper products.

Members and their spouses/significant others are free. Guests are \$10/person.

We will be raffling off baskets: \$2 for a single ticket, \$5 for three tickets.

NAME(S): _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL _____

DISH TO PASS: _____

Numbers to attend: _____ Amount paid _____

**Payments can be made by check to the Vincent Lombardi Lodge #2270
Mail to: Marisa Przepiora 4552 Wildflower Drive, Canandaigua, NY 14424 by
July 24th. Or pay with paypal/credit card using the QR code to the right.
Please include a note with your payment indicating your dish to pass, and
include a \$3 service fee for credit card/paypal payments.**





7/4: Robert Kosinsky, Nancy Rubé
 7/8: Joseph DiMaria, Richard Meleca
 7/9: Hon. Ann Marie Taddeo
 7/15: Marjorie Focarazzo
 7/16: Melissa DiStaffen
 7/17: Richard Antelli, Karen Pelc
 7/18: Rosita Caridi-Miller
 7/21: Elizabeth Osta
 7/22: Stephanie Brey
 7/23: Robert Golino
 7/25: Bill Agnello



Sending love and prayers to all of our members who have been dealing with illness, with a special prayer for Gordie and Pat Rask, and Ezio and Lila Bonanni.



Offering a warm welcome to our newest approved members: Paul Guglielmo, James Bruno, and John Julien. We look forward to meeting you soon!

Last Call For Tickets!!!!



It's a repurposed guitar and it's a lamp. It's one of a kind, a piece of artwork, made by Stephen Cataldi, a member of the Vincent Lombardi Lodge. The unique lodge logo was designed especially for our lodge by our past lodge president Jennifer Rubé.

The LED lights can change colors (red, green, blue) and change brightness & speed with the beat of music, by using its own mike to hear music that you provide. Hang it on a wall or a guitar stand, use it as a night light, or a decoration for your den, office or bar.

Tickets cost: \$10 for a single ticket or \$25 for three tickets and our raffle will be held August 5th at our Member Picnic! For more information and to purchase tickets, contact us at vincentlombardilodge@gmail.com.

At the 2023 Grand Lodge Convention, our newsletter was chosen as a winner for the Best Layout For Photography and Design Category!

Our lodge has now received 4 of the 6 awards!

- Most Promising (2014)
- Best Newsletter (2016)
- Most Informative (2022)
- Best Layout for Photography (2023)





Join our General Assembly Meetings by Zoom

You now have the option to join our General Assembly meetings by zoom if you are unable to attend in person.

This link will remain the same for all GA meetings this year.

Please join us May 11th at 7pm:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82651398467?pwd=SmlnbDhxbWlHS0gvVHJjblB0UjJBUT09>

Meeting ID: 826 5139 8467
Passcode: 865390

Did you know you can pay for dues and events and even make donations to the Vincent Lombardi Lodge by credit card or PayPal?

When utilizing PayPal, include a note indicating what the payment is for. Please include a **\$3 service charge** when you make your

There are four ways to do this:

1. See Financial Secretary Marisa Przepiora at a meeting or event to utilize our credit card reader.
2. Log into your PayPal account, click the link to send money and send to:
vincentlombardilodge@gmail.com.
3. Ask a Council member to have an invoice with a link for payment sent to your email address.
4. Scan the QR code here.



Check it out!

Great News! The new edition of L'Italo-Americano is now available.

Go to italoamericano.org click DIGITAL EDITION and enjoy your weekly dose of "All Things Italian".



L'Italo Americano
THE VOICE
OF THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN
COMMUNITY
FOR OVER 100 YEARS
BE PART OF IT BE PROUD OF IT

Thanks to Sister Karen Pelc for the recommendation!



District VIII well represented in the competition and awards categories at the NYS Grand Lodge Convention!

Brother Joseph Rubé, Vincent Lombardi Lodge
2023 Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro Award

Brother Mike Cutillo, Geneva Lodge
2023 Literary Award

Geneva Lodge #2397
Community Youth Outreach Award

Vincent Lombardi Lodge #2270
Newsletter Award, Best Layout for Photography

Brother Tom Meleca, Vincent Lombardi Lodge
2nd Place, Grand Lodge Raffle - \$5000 Prize

2023 Scholarship Award Winners

Vincent Lombardi Lodge Scholarships

\$1500 Lodge Scholarship - Emma Rosato

\$1000 Lodge Scholarship - Joshua DiNicola

\$1500 Past Honorees Scholarship - Maddy Brunswick

\$1000 Past Honorees Scholarship - Evan Stanley

\$1500 Rubé Scholarship in honor of Jennifer Rubé - Emily DiCesare

\$1500 - Joseph Darryl DiStaffen Scholarship - Gabriella Brongo

NYS Grand Lodge Scholarships

Alexander Bruno

Emma Rosato

Daniel Acquilano

Please join us to celebrate these deserving scholarship recipients at our General Assembly Meeting and Scholarship Awards Night on July 13th.



HOUSE WARMING PARTY

Safe Harbors of the Finger Lakes shelter can use our help

The door is one of humankind's greatest inventions. It is so commonplace that we hardly give it any thought or consider its significance. Imagine what life would be like if we didn't have doors that allow us in or keep us out. Doors can be a transition, a way to cross from one place to another. They provide privacy, reservedness, and security. They can imply the beginning to something or the end, and sometimes they indicate a choice to be made. And there is the adage, "When one door closes, another opens." We just need to recognize it and accept that what may be in front of us will provide us the opportunity to something better.

The doors to Safe Harbors of the Finger Lakes needs help with those everyday items we take for granted. Although we cannot have a housewarming celebration at their location, we can still have a housewarming celebration! Sr. Marisa has a list of items that are needed to open the doors, to provide some comforts of home, and to let those who enter these doors know they are safe and protected. **Please bring your donations to the Members Picnic. We want to load up Sr. Marisa's car with all the things she needs to create a welcoming space.**

Each one of us can make a difference. Together we make change. ~Barbara Mikulski

Towels – Large Bath Towels, Hand Towels, washcloths.
Laundry Baskets
Large Toaster Oven
Large Air Fryer
Roaster Pan
Large Crockpot
Tin Foil
Saran Wrap
Parchment Paper
Ziploc Bags – Gallon, Quart, Sandwich

Tupperware
Pots and Pans
Laundry soap
Dryer Sheets
Diapers – All Sizes
Wipes
Feminine Hygiene Products

****Small appliances can be used but must be clean and in good working condition****



2023 Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro Award Presented to Dr. Joseph Rubé', Jr.



Dr. Joseph Rubé is the epitome of Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro and has emulated Dr. Sellaro's "I have a Dream" to better the lives of those around him in their social, civic, and personal standing in society. Dr. Joe gave the best care to anyone who walked through the doors of his practice but took special care to make sure his Italian patients who did not speak English understood their diagnosis and care in terms they could understand. For any

physician this is no easy feat, but Dr. Joe made a connection that helped his patients get through a very difficult time. Now retired, Dr. Joe was a general surgeon in private practice for more than 30 years, where he specialized in treating breast cancer. He continues Dr. Sellaro's legacy fighting for the rights of Italian Americans by denigrating all forms of racism and discrimination. He is committed to preserving our identity and history, and as recipient of this award, there is no one who exemplifies the virtues of Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro better.

Community is very important to Br. Joe. He has been involved with many Italian organizations and served in a leadership capacity in most: Italian American Community Center, on the board of the Sicilian Sports Club, Vice President and President for the Friends of Italian Genealogy, committee representative for the Rochester Columbus Day Parade, Vice President of the Rochester Chapter of Partners of the America, and a board member for the Kiwanis Club.

Dr. Joe's dedication to OSDIA goes without saying. From our local Lodge to the Supreme Lodge, he has been instrumental in seeing that the work of the order is accomplished. He joined the Lodge in 2003 and from 2005, he has held numerous positions. At the local level, as trustee, president, financial secretary, and current orator; at the District VIII level he was the Lodge Deputy to the Geneva Lodge and CSJ Chair; served as state trustee for the NYS Grand Lodge and is currently the Newsletter Competition Chairperson; he shows his support at the Supreme level through the Gold Membership Program.

Dr. Joe has been recognized on more than one occasion for his professional and community dedication. In 2005, he received the Man of the Year Award from the OSDIA Vincent Lombardi Lodge, and in 2012 he was honored with the Award for Lifetime Achievement by the Rochester Italian Civic League. In addition to these awards, Dr. Joe has been honored with the Award for Distinguished Service as President of the Medical and Dental Staff, The Most Valued Partner Award for Individual Excellence in Customer Services, and the Team Excellence Award from the Genesee Hospital, as well as the Pillar of Excellence Award, the Department of Quality and Clinical Excellence Award, and the Medical Staff Alumnus Honored Teacher, Colleague and Friend Award through the Rochester General Hospital.

Dr. Joe's life and heritage mirror Dr. Sellaro's in many ways. Born in Paterson, New Jersey on August 31, 1944 to parents Joseph and Ruth Rubé, his paternal grandparents, Antonino and Lucia, had come to America from Polizzi Generosa - the very same village where Dr. Sellaro was born. After attending Fairfield University for his undergraduate degree, Dr. Rubé attended medical school at the University of Bologna in Italy, the world's oldest medical school, where he graduated in 1971. Dr. Joe followed his father's footsteps in deciding to become a surgeon by completing his internship and residency in surgery at the Rochester Genesee Hospital and the University of Rochester. Dr. Sellaro earned his medical degree from the University of Naples Federico II in 1895 and immigrated to the United States in 1897. Dr. Joe, like Dr. Sellaro, cared for Italians who spoke little or no English and helped them understand their diagnoses and what treatment was needed.

The Vincent Lombardi Lodge is proud to have Joseph Rubé, MD as the recipient of this year's Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro Award.



2023 Literary Award Michael Joseph Cutillo

A long standing member of the Geneva Lodge #2397, Mike's Italian roots are grounded in Italy with his father born in San Salvatore Telesino, Italy and his mother's family from the same area.

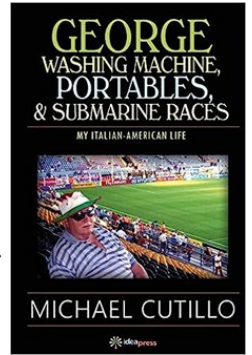
Mike's writing career began with a BA in communications from St. John Fisher College. His 41 year career as a journalist continues as publisher of the Finger Lakes Times. He has won numerous NYS Associated Press and NY & Pennsylvania Publishers Associated awards. He has been named state-

Columnist of the Year for small newspapers three times by the NYNPA. He has been honored by Section V in Rochester for his sports coverage and by media company Gatehouse with his award winning pieces appearing in The Best of Gatehouse. You probably know him best for his articles in the NYS Grand Lodge Golden Lion each issue. His articles in the Golden Lion best tell stories of his family, his travels to Italy, and how wonderful it is to be an Italian American.

In 2019, Mike published his first book, "George Washing Machine, Portables and Submarine Races: My Italian American Life". His book is about immigrant family life, values, and customs, a great family memoir where Mike talks about the saga of his father's life in two different worlds.

Mike has been actively involved in the Geneva Lodge where he has held numerous positions and was a Deputy to our own Lodge. He has organized many trips over the years to Italy, and while he says this current one is the last, we know this is one of his great passions.

Congratulations Mike on a well deserved honor!



The Grand Lodge of New York Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America 36th State President Biagio J. Isgro, jr.

Let me introduce you to the newly elected president of the The Grand Lodge of New York, Biagio J. Isgro, Jr. His parents, Biagio and Josephine along with his sister, Anna Marie emigrated to the United States in 1955 from Sicily for a better life. Although Biagio was born here, he was raised in the old fashion culture and traditions and quickly learned to respect his Italian roots.

He turned down an offer to join the Albany County Sheriff's Department to accept a position as a firefighter in Albany. His career with the fire department included being a paramedic, rescue diver, and arson investigator. He retired after 24 years of service in 2011.

In addition to being a firefighter, Biagio also attended the New York State Police Academy and graduated as a certified diver. He was involved in a diving operation in 2010 in the Hudson River when a cargo ship rolled over and three sailors went missing. He and other divers spent 20 days searching for the men in the frozen and sick waters until they were found.

Biagio has been actively involved in OSDIA since he joined the Roma Intangible Lode #215 in 1999. He held several positions with his Lodge until he was elected as state trustee for District 6 in 2006, and he has been elected to numerous positions since.

In 2010 he founded the C.I.A.O (Council of Italian American Organizations) in upstate NY, which was formed to bring all the Italian American organizations together as one voice to preserve Italian traditions, culture, and promote a positive image of Italian Americans.

He majored in Accounting and Business Administration at SUNY Albany, and is currently co-owner and VP-Operations & Marketing, CFO for Safe Systems Corporation Employee Health Services in Albany. He and his wife, Marisol, live in the Altamont area, located in Albany County.

**Grand Lodge of New York
Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America
115th State Convention - "Embracing Our Shared Heritage"**

Grand Convention Chairperson, Ernest Magliato, welcomed delegates to the First General Session, Thursday, June 8, 2023 at 2:30 pm and was dedicated to President Michele Cangiano Ment. The business of the Order began immediately with accepting the Standing Rules for the convention, approval of the 2022 convention minutes, introduction of National Officers and dignitaries. State Officers gave synopsis of their reports, along with the membership report, which showed an increase in 2022, and a review of the 2023-2024 budget before the session was recessed.

At the Second General Session on Friday morning, committee reports continued. CSJ reported on all its activities for the year, and we continue to promote a positive image of Italian Americans across the globe. The Garibaldi Meucci Museum highlighted their activities, but the one to stand out was the inauguration of the Tower of Light-La Torre di Luce-erected on its grounds. Giorgio Bortoli, Venetian sculpture and donor of this majestic piece of art was honored. La Torre di Luce will serve as a beacon for the museum. Awards for Community Outreach, Family of the Year, and the Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro Award were presented.

Community Outreach Award is the recognition of an activity for providing services to any population who might not have access to those services under normal circumstances. Four awards are presented under this: **Community Activities** going to the Stella D'Argento Lodge #1916, **Fraternal Family Activities** awarded to America Lodge #2245, **Heritage/Cultural Activities** given to Cellini Lodge #2206, and **Youth Activities** went to the Geneva Lodge #2397. Congratulations to all the recipients, but especially to Geneva Lodge who shares our District!

Family of the Year was bestowed to the Ferrara-Franchi Family of the Cellino Lodge #2206. This award recognizes and acknowledges an OSDIA family that has distinguished themselves in the ideals and principles of the Order and displays traditions and values of the Italian-American family.

The *Dr. Vincenzo Sellaro Award* was presented to two winners: Maria D'Urso of Cellino Lodge #2206 and to Dr. Joseph Rubé of our Lodge. What an exciting presentation for our delegates along with Nancy, Marisa, and Chris.

The Third General Session convened after lunch on Friday and the nominating committee reported its slate:

President	Biagio Isgro, Jr,
1 st Vice President	Arthur Spera
2 nd Vice President	Luigi Squillante
Orator	Keith Wilson
Recording Secretary	Ernest Magliato
Financial Secretary	Gina Franchi
Corresponding Secretary	Remo Carriero
Treasurer	Andrew Reilly

At the evening festivities, the Bene Emeritus Award was presented to Marianne Principe O'Neil. Marianne has been active in OSDIA for more than 40 years not only in her local lodge but also with the NYS Grand Lodge on numerous committees as well as a state trustee. She has served with the National team from New York for several years and was elected as a National Trustee from 2009-2012 and is currently a National Foundation Trustee.

The Fourth General Session on Saturday morning began with the Scholarship Committee Report. This year 114 applications were received for eleven State Scholarships, six Graduate scholarships, and 127 District Scholarships, which were presented on June 17, 2023 at the Tappan Zee High School. Recipient of the New York State Scholarship, Adeline and Nicholas P. DiNapoli Scholarship was Alexander Bruno, from West Irondequoit High School. The District Scholarships went to Emma Rosato who graduated from Aquinas Institute and Daniel Acquilano from Geneva High School.

The *Literary Award* was another kudos for District VIII going to Michael Cutillo. If his name is familiar, he writes a column in the Golden Lion, and is a member of the Geneva Lodge. His recent book, *George Washing Machine, Portables and Submarine Races: My Italian American Life* provides a personal journey with stories from his own family, which may be similar to what we have experienced in our own families (His book can be found on Amazon) .

(Continued)

(continued from page 9)

The results of the Newsletter Competition were provided by Dr. Joseph Rube` and Marianne Bortone Prince, Chairs. Our Lodge received the Best Layout for Photography award, whose Editor is Sr. Marisa Przepiora. Eleven lodges each submitted three newsletters for judging, and judges came from each of the 8 districts that make up our NYS delegation.

General Laws and Bylaws provided information on amendments and bylaw changes: Art. 15 B.L. 2 change is that no local lodge may be formed without prior approval of the Executive Board and Grand Council; also approved, Art. 107 B.L 1 involves the number of consecutive terms in the same office an elected officer can serve; Art. 107 B.L. 2 states that all Grand Lodge Officers shall be eligible to serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same position; and Art. 107 B.L 2 says the office of State President shall be limited to one (1) two (2) year term. All changes were approved.

Delegates submitted their charitable donations. The approximate results are \$75,000 in the following:

Alzheimer's Foundation	\$11,000
Doug Flutie Jr Foundation for Autism	\$9,000
Cancer Research	\$10,000
Commission for Social Justice	\$6,000
Cooley's Anemia	\$23,000
Garibaldi Meucci Museum	\$6,000
Gift of Sight	\$7,000
Veteran's Fund	\$4,000

The \$100 ticket raffle gave one of our members a win - congratulations Br. Tom Meleca!

Grand March of the newly elected New York State Grand Lodge was held on Saturday evening. Installation followed dinner.

The Sixth and Final General Session was held on Sunday morning. President Biagio Isgro Jr. announced his committee chairpersons. It was announced the 2024 116th State Convention would be held in June at the Desmond.

Every odd year, delegates elect a new state president and executive board who will lead us. Much work, time, and energy go into making the convention run smoothly and be a success, but it is an exciting time.

Vincent Lombardi Lodge delegates: Marjorie Focarazzo, Joseph Rubé, Kitty DiNicola, and Ron Santoli. Our special guests who also attended: Nancy Rubé, Luigi DiFilippo, Marisa and Chris Przepiora.

Submitted by
Marjorie Focarazzo





New York State Commission for Social Justice - Reported at the 115th State Convention

The NYS CSJ focuses on combating defamation, bias, and bigotry of Italians, Italian Americans, and other groups. It is also motivated to promote a positive image of Italians and Italian Americans. While 2022 brought some successes, there remains the constant fight in retaining Columbus Day at all levels of government and to keep statues of Columbus given to cities by Italian communities in their place of honor.

Columbus Day and Columbus Statues: In Rochester, the city council voted to end the celebration of Columbus Day and replace it with Indigenous Peoples' Day. This decision mocks the Italian American community in Monroe County, whose Italian American population according to the US Census (2017) ranks the area Number 9 on the list of 50 cities with the most Italian American population at 134,000 according to the National Italian American Foundation. What is further disturbing are the Italian Americans in the Rochester area who agree with the decision and fight the celebration of Columbus.

In Philadelphia, the Italian American community continues to fight against eliminating Columbus Day and replacing it with Indigenous People's Day. The mayor and City of Philadelphia were sued on the basis of discrimination. Judge Charles C. Damell Jones dismissed the case on whether the Italian community had a standing, whether they suffered discrimination, and whether changing a holiday was the right to free speech. Defense council, George Bocchetto has repealed the decision and is waiting for a ruling.

Minnesota also proposes to replace Columbus Day, a bill from representative Heather Keeler, who is a Native American. A letter from CSJ Chair, John Fratta, was sent to the House State Government Finance and Elections Committee Representative Michael Nelson and Vice Chair Representative Andrew Carlson urging them to oppose the bill. Portsmouth, New Hampshire City Council voted to remove Columbus Day. They did not seek any input from the Italian American community, nor did they give any notice before the vote was brought to the floor.

One positive note of sorts comes from The Columbus Monument Committee in Syracuse. As previously noted, Mayor Ben Walsh sought to have the Columbus statue in Columbus Circle removed but leaving the stand in place. This statue was paid for by members of the Italian American community, whose relatives still live in the area. The Committee filed a notice of intent with the courts to prevent the Mayor from removing the statue. Supreme Court Justice Gerard Neri presided, heard both sides, and rendered a decision in favor of the Committee. The Mayor and City of Syracuse decided to appeal the decision. The Columbus Monument Committee is waiting for a decision, but the CSJ will continue to support our Brothers and Sisters in Syracuse until a positive outcome is received.

Once again, NY State Senator Jessica Ramos and Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes have introduced a bill in both houses to replace Columbus Day. Fortunately, the bill has not come out of the committee for a vote. Make your voices heard by contacting your state representative to get this bill killed.

In Massachusetts the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight has voted to remove Columbus Day, and if passed by the legislature, the Columbus Day holiday will be abolished and replaced. A victory for CSJ was that these bills were not brought up for vote for the legislature and Columbus Day remains a holiday. California's US House Representative, Norma Torres, has introduced a bill to replace Columbus Day. While not a victory, no action, to date, has been taken on this bill.

METV callousness towards Italian Americans was ramped on Columbus Day when a Native American woman promoted her heritage and described the struggles of Native Americans. The segment ended with Happy Indigenous Peoples' Day. Nothing was mentioned about Christopher Columbus Day or Italian Heritage Month or the discrimination, bigotry, and struggles our ancestors suffered when they immigrated to the US.

Slanted history and misinformation are not only being taught in the classroom but is promoted by Departments of Educations. In NYS, the Dept. of Education lists Indigenous Peoples' Day. Class teachings are false and misleading portraying Columbus as being cruel and inhuman to the natives, selling millions of people into slavery, stole the land and claimed it for Spain through violent battles. Rocky Point High School plans to discontinue the Italian Language Program due to low enrollment, but the numbers say something different when compared to students taking other foreign languages in the district—total enrollment grades 7th through 11th are Italian 109 and French 79. It appears, numbers, once again, tell the true story. Some victories have taken place: Magnolia Independent School District added Columbus Day to their school calendar, which was approved unanimously by teachers, parents, and school administrators.

More victories: Morgantown, West Virginia City Council wanted to remove Columbus Day from the calendar, but many residents and groups objected, proving the voice of the citizen can make a difference. In Philadelphia, two lawsuits were won against mayor Jim Kenny and the city to keep the Columbus Statue. The second lawsuit was in removing the box covering from the statue, but the mayor refused to honor the judge's decision. Petitioners asked the court if they could remove the covering and were granted permission, but the mayor once again defied the court order and stationed police officers at the statue with the order to arrest anyone trying to remove the box. But the CSJ is determined and has prevailed, and the Statue of Columbus once again stands tall and proud.

While the status of Columbus Day or statues of Columbus is in flux, the CSJ has been able to gain some support. NY City Mayor, Eric Adams, has pledged to oppose any measure to remove any Columbus Statue. He has appointed prominent Italian Americans to his administration: First Deputy Mayor Lorraine Grillo, Chief of Staff Frank Carone, Deputy Mayor of Operations James Oddo, and Efficiency Czar James La Rocca.

More support comes from NY Governor Kathy Hochul, who has proclaimed October 10, 2023 as Columbus Day. She has also appointed Thomas Scarangelo as the Italian American Liaison to the governor. She held a St. Joseph's breakfast for major Italian American groups. OSDIA was proudly represented by President Michele Cangiano Ment, NYS CSJ Chair John Fratta, National CSJ President Robert Ferrito, and OSDIA Foundation President Joseph Sciame. At this event, Governor Hockul announced a \$1 million grant for the Italian American Museum, and she plans to provide aid to Little Italy's in the state still struggling from COVID restrictions.

Columbus was not the only challenge for the NYS CSJ this past year. The author of that part in our Declaration of Independence, "... we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" is under attack. Filippo Mazzei, a close friend of Thomas Jefferson, gave him the phrase. Film writer, Ken Burns, claims that it was Ben Franklin who spoke those words, but documentation in a letter from Mazzei to Jefferson contains this powerful quote with a request that it be included in the Declaration of Independence. A letter to AARP has been sent demanding the truth be told.

One horrific and terrible event took place at Boarding School EF Academy in Thornwood, NY when senior, Claudio Mandia, took his own life. He admitted to cheating on a math exam, and to punish the student, he was removed from class, placed in a solitary confinement, and expelled. He was held in solitary confinement for four days under conditions considered unbearable without any human contact and was not provided food for breakfast or lunch. His sister, Martina, having not heard from Claudio in four days, begged the administration to check on her brother. The counselor found Claudio dead; suicide was the determination. The NYS CSJ has asked for a complete investigation into this matter and charges to be brought against the administration at the Academy. The family hired George Bocchetto, Attorney to represent them. CSJ Chair, John Fratta spoke with Mr. Bocchetto expressing our desire for justice for Claudio and his family, but the CSJ is cognizant of the family's time to grieve for their son. Contact with the New York Attorney General's office responded to a call from the DA's office in the jurisdiction where the school is located, and that an investigation is being conducted. The family's lawsuit against the Academy has been settled. Once the investigation is completed, the outcome will be shared.

Ongoing skits mocking Italians on Saturday Night Live, while infuriating, has resulted in no positive action. Both National CSJ President Robert Ferrito and NYS Chair John Fratta have decided this is not a battle worth fighting. They see no changes happening.

The Commission for Social Justice was founded in 1979 to fight stereotyping of Italian Americans in all facets of life, particularly in the entertainment world, marketing, and media. It is not just limited to us, but our concern ensures that people of all races, religions, and cultures are treated with dignity and respect. Through the Positive Image Program, the CSJ regularly informs the media and general public about Italian American contributions, achievements, history, and culture. It conducts research, [produces studies, teaching tools, pamphlets, exhibits, and other materials. The job of the CSJ, both at the National and New York State levels, is something we all share in. By not saying something or doing something when we are disrespected, denigrated, degraded, belittled, or defame is giving permission for that behavior to continue. If a word, phrase, action makes you feel uncomfortable or ill at ease, the choice is yours to let others know we are proud of our culture, our heritage, the contributions and differences we have made to society.

Presidents Bene Emeritus Award Presentation *2023 Award - Sandra Meleca*

On July 2nd, members of our lodge, along with her family and friends, presented Past President Sandra Meleca with our 1st annual Presidents Bene Emeritus Award. We had a wonderful time with Sandy, and were grateful for the opportunity to present her with this important award. The presentation was recorded and will be shown at our October Italian American Heritage Dinner, along with our other 2023 awards.



2023 Grand Lodge Convention June 8th - 11th



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OSDIA Vincent Lombardi Lodge
84 Mulcahy Blvd
Rochester, NY 14624

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All Vincent Lombardi Lodge communications should be sent to:

**President Marjorie Focarazzo
84 Mulcahy Blvd
Rochester, NY 14624
mafocarazzo@gmail.com**