



ORDER
Sons and
Daughters
of Italy
IN AMERICA

La Bandiera

***The Banner
Newsletter of
The Italian Heritage Lodge #2517
Fairfax, Virginia
Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America***

**DICEMBRE 2025
MESSAGGIO DELLA PRESIDENTESSA**

Buon Natale a tutti,

This year has been a year of major change for IHL. We've lost many beautiful souls and we will miss them all. We're also growing with many new members that I welcome with open arms. These new relationships have forged new friendships and activities. We've had many fun events throughout the year and hosted the 39th Biennial state convention with great success. I know 2026 will be another stellar year.

Please remember,

Someone you know is preparing for their first Christmas without their husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter or friend.

Others are preparing for their last.

Regardless of the specifics, please remember that the season of joy is often a season of sorrow for many.

Be kind, be generous, give love, give help, and if nothing else, remember the real reason for the season.

I look forward to seeing you at the Christmas party. Please RSVP.

God bless. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Dawn



IL CALENDARIO

4 dicembre	GLVA Quarterly Meeting	7:00 p.m.	Zoom
6 dicembre	<i>Festa di Natale*</i>	4:00 p.m.	Knights Hall
13 dicembre	Cene e conversazione**		
15 dicembre	Deadline for Charitable Donations		
25 dicembre	<i>Buon Natale</i>		
4 gennaio	New Year's Brunch*	11:00-1:30 p.m.	Knights Hall



* RSVP to Steve Kramer (steven.kramer52@gmail.com)

** RSVP to Dennis Ferrara (dennisferrara@hey.com)

Our annual *Festa di Natale* will be held on Saturday, December 6th beginning at 4:00 p.m. Again, we will be collecting toys for the Hospital For Sick Children in Washington, DC, so please bring an unwrapped gift with a value of at least \$10.00 to place under the Christmas tree. Gifts will be brought to the hospital in time for Christmas. Please RSVP to Steve Kramer at steven.kramer52@gmail.com by December 4th. See the flyer in this Newsletter for all information so that you, your family and friends can come and celebrate the traditions and festivities of this season.

Please remember in your prayers our long-time member, Rosalie Ciccotelli, who recently suffered a slight stroke and is in rehab. She is doing well. If you would like to send her get well wishes, she can be reached at the following address:

*Alexandria Rehabilitation and Health Center
900 Virginia Avenue, Room 104B
Alexandria, Virginia 22302*



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Rosalie Ciccotelli	December 2
Rosalind Michaelangelo	December 5
Betsy Mignani	December 6
Frank Bonsiero	December 8
Peter Ognibene	December 9
Gerry Croce	December 16
Augustine Taormina	December 24



Buon Natale e Buon Anno Nuovo



The IHL Festa di Natale will be held on Saturday, December 6th beginning at 4:00 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall (behind St. Leo the Great Catholic Church, 3700 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax)

Join in the Christmas season festivities spreading good cheer, with delicious food and fun as we celebrate with our IHL brothers and sisters, their families, and guests. The evening's menu will include holiday appetizers, Honey Baked Ham and Turkey, seasonal side dishes and desserts. Once again, Dennis Lillo will provide his famous homemade eggnog to lighten the evening. The cost is \$20.00 per person, and an RSVP is required.

*"Santa Swap"
Bring a \$15
wrapped
gift to swap!*

*Christmas
Raffles!*



*Christmas
Cheer!*

*Homemade
Eggnog*

In keeping with the spirit of Christmas, please bring an unwrapped gift to put under our Christmas tree for those children who will be spending Christmas in the hospital. All donations will be taken to the Hospital For Sick Children in Washington, D.C. before Christmas Eve. Please make your unwrapped gift at least a \$10 item.

RSVP by Thursday, December 4, to Steve Kramer at steven.kramer52@gmail.com



In Memoriam

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



Marianne Hallahan

***IHL Recording Secretary and
Executive Council, GLVA
Grand Council***

***Marianne was a beloved
member to all who knew her, a
gracious lady and loving
mother, grandmother, and dear
friend.***



Alfred Michaelangelo

IHL Member

***Fred was a charming man,
kind and a fabulous husband
and father to nine children.
You couldn't help but feel the
overwhelming love everyone
had for him. He will be
missed by many.***



Marilyn Miyasato

IHL Member

***Marilyn was the beloved wife of Jim
Cocco, who lovingly cared for her
during her lengthy health struggles.
Marilyn enjoyed her times at IHL
events, and we all loved being with
her to share these times.***



**Tom Cassella
father of Carol Cassella
(IHL Member and former
Trustee)**



**Russell Carolla
father of Maria Carolla
(IHL Member and Trustee)**

**Ann M. Martin
mother of Kevin Donaleski
(IHL Member)**

Benvenuti !

*Please welcome our newest members,
Linda Berona, Judy Cretara, Abby Malco, Aaron Gustafson, and
Mike Ferraro.*

*We look forward to seeing you at many of our upcoming events and
enjoy getting to know you all!*

Benvenuti nella nostra famiglia italiana.

IHL Annual Dues

*In early December, each member will be receiving a “Dues Notice” by email from Steven Kramer, IHL Financial Secretary. We encourage those who will be attending the **Festa di Natale** to bring your payment to this event on December 6th. Otherwise, please read Steve’s instructions when you receive his email for payment amount and remittance.*

Notice of Nominations and Elections

According to our Bylaws, the IHL Nominating Committee was elected at our meeting on November 8 and consists of Teresa Telerico, Chairwoman, Laura Asiello, John Asiello, Carol Cassella and Kevin Donaleski. This Nominating Committee will solicit members who may be considering filling open council seats. The process begins in November and carries through February with installation of new officers and trustees in March 2026. Please start thinking about whether you would like to be considered, to use your talents, skills, creativity and contribute in other ways to the success of our lodge. Members will be kept updated through La Bandiera regarding nominations, voting process and the installation ceremony details.

Cena e Conversazione!

November and December gatherings have been combined and will be held on Saturday evening, December 13th. It will be held at the home of June and Joe La Marca and will feature heavy appetizers or “eats” instead of a full meal. Come and be part of our group that practices our beautiful Italian language, with exchanges in cultural and social customs, travel and general conversation.

The goal of the IHL Language Group is to promote our Italian heritage through language by creating opportunities to practice and improve our ability to speak Italian. To that end, we strive to create a friendly and pleasant environment for our meetings. Specifically, we meet monthly in a social setting to speak as much Italian as we can.

Contact Dennis Ferrara at dennisferrara@hey.com for more information.

IHL FOOD DRIVE TO BENEFIT THE HOUSE OF MERCY FOOD PANTRY

Grazie a tutti!

Sixty-three pounds of canned, boxed, packaged and jarred foods were collected at our October and November meetings and donated to the House of Mercy Food Pantry in Manassas prior to Thanksgiving.

Our members were extremely generous again this year. As always, IHL is grateful for the opportunity to once again assist our community as a fraternal organization through you, our kind members!



Colette Sciscilo with two volunteer members of the House of Mercy Food Pantry receiving the food donated by IHL.



IHL sisters Sharon, Colette and Dawn enjoyed an afternoon at Reitano Vineyards, Front Royal, VA, listening to the sounds of "Three Strikes Band", whose original member is Jeff Sciscilo (left). Jeff plays lead guitar, keyboard, mandolin & vocals specializing in 50-60-70's music.



Three Italian-American Women Nominated for Seven Grammy Music Awards

By Joseph Scafetta Jr.

The Recording Academy has announced its nominees for its 68th annual Grammy Music Awards in its 16 major categories, and three Italian-American women have been nominated in seven of those categories.

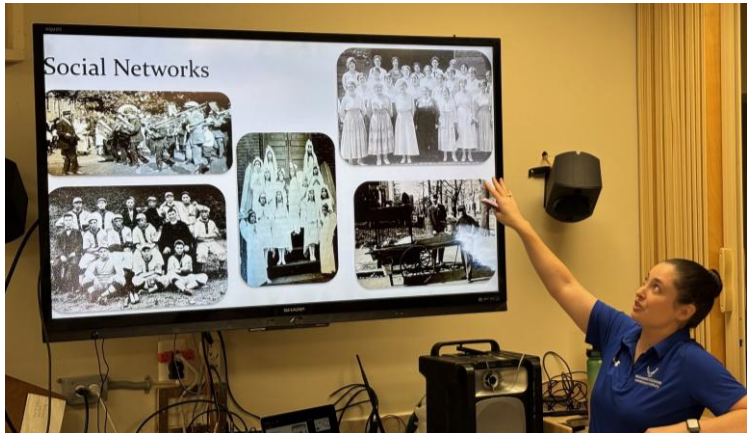
Lady Gaga, whose birth name is Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, was nominated in five categories. Her "Mayhem" was nominated for Album of the Year and also for Best Pop Vocal Album; her "Abracadabra" for Record of the Year and also for Song of the Year; and her "Disease" for Best Pop Solo Performance.

Ariana Grande was nominated with Cynthia Erivo for their "Defying Gravity" for Best Pop Duo/Group Performance while Kelsea Ballerini's "Patterns" was nominated for Best Contemporary Country Album.

The winners will be announced and given their awards in Los Angeles on Sunday, February 1, 2026.

Salute to Veterans – Saturday, November 8, 2025
Presentation by Capt. (Ret.) Kathleen Principe Crockett
“The Italians of Washington from 1880 to 1940”

Our guest speaker for the Italian Heritage Lodge dinner on Saturday, November 8, 2025 was Captain (Ret.) Kathleen Principe Crockett, USAF. She began her master’s degree in history at the University of Massachusetts Boston while still on active duty and is writing her thesis on the early Italian community of Washington, D.C., exploring how it developed differently from other East Coast Italian enclaves. The title of her Power Point presentation was “The Italians of Washington from 1880 to 1940” which was well received by our members and guests.



*Photographs courtesy of
 Tom Ammazalorso and Eleanor Lillo*



St. Francis Gave Us the Nativity Scene and Forever Changed Christmas

How a Christmas Eve scene in Greccio in 1223 set in motion the centuries-long journey from live Nativity to the Italian presepe.

In December 1223, in a rocky grotto near the hill town of Greccio, about 50 miles north of Rome, St. Francis of Assisi staged what is widely considered the first live Nativity scene.

The inspiration came from Francis' travels to the Holy Land between 1219 and 1220. Moved by the sacred sites associated with Christ's birth, life and resurrection, he sought to recreate the Bethlehem experience for believers "with our bodily eyes." By late 1223, while awaiting papal approval for the rule that would establish the Franciscan Order, Francis returned to Greccio, where he had long preached to villagers and shepherds, according to the National Catholic Register.

A Living Nativity

Two weeks before Christmas, Francis asked Giovanni Velita, the local lord of Greccio, to prepare a grotto with a hay-filled manger and live animals, including an ox and donkey. On Christmas Eve, townspeople gathered by flickering torchlight for Mass. Francis proclaimed the Gospel and preached on the humility of Christ's birth, contrasting the simplicity of the manger with worldly grandeur.

Contemporary accounts, including those by his early biographer Thomas of Celano, describe the event not as a display of statues but as a sensory, living representation meant to evoke Bethlehem itself.

According to tradition, a villager witnessed a miraculous appearance of an infant in the empty manger, embraced by Francis. In the days that followed, the straw from the manger was said to bring healing to animals and to women facing hardship.

Born into wealth, St. Francis of Assisi embraced poverty, served the poor and founded the Franciscan Order.



Greccio remains a place of pilgrimage. A hermitage and sanctuary now stand where the original grotto was prepared, featuring frescoes depicting the event. Each Christmas, the townspeople reenact the first living Nativity, continuing a tradition now in its fifth decade.

In December 2019, Pope Francis visited Greccio and signed the apostolic letter *Admirabile Signum*, reaffirming the importance of Nativity scenes in Catholic devotion. He emphasized that the original scene, enacted with live presence rather than fixed figures, invites believers to “feel and touch” the poverty embraced by Christ at his birth, linking the Incarnation directly to the Eucharist celebrated over the manger.

A Lasting Tradition

Francis’ living Nativity at Greccio marked a turning point in Christian devotional life. In the centuries that followed, his dramatic reenactment inspired churches across Italy and Europe to create sculpted Nativity displays, first as fixed reliefs or life-size statues set within chapels. By the 1500s, artisans, especially in central Italy and Naples, began crafting smaller, movable figurines for homes, transforming the Greccio living nativity into a personal devotional practice.

By the 18th century, the Neapolitan *presepe* had become an art form of its own, featuring detailed wooden or terracotta figures arranged in elaborate village scenes. These early Italian traditions laid the foundation for the familiar, inanimate Nativity sets used around the world today. Though no longer “live,” their origins trace directly to Francis’ desire to make the mystery of Christ’s birth tangible and accessible for everyday believers.



A presepe artisan builds a Nativity scene in Naples, Italy.

**ORDER SONS & DAUGHTERS OF ITALY IN AMERICA
ITALIAN HERITAGE LODGE #2517
2025-2026 OFFICERS**

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<u>Imm. Past-President:</u> 703-795-2231	Coletta Sciscilo colette.sciscilo@gmail.com	Angelo Saladini
<u>Orator:</u> 703-533-8064	Joseph Scafetta Jr. joseph.scafetta.jr@gmail.com	Donna Stoll
<u>Recording Secretary:</u> 703-831-7551	Tommaso Ammazalorso tammazza@gmail.com	Ray Stoll
<u>Financial Secretary:</u> 703-489-9279	Steven Kramer steven.kramer52@gmail.com	
<u>Treasurer:</u> 703-241-7775	John Dovel jhn.dovel@gmail.com	
<u>Master of Ceremonies:</u>	Roy Schender	
<u>Mistress of Ceremonies:</u>	Sandy Schender	
<u>Guard:</u>	Dennis Lillo	
<u>Programs & Activities:</u>		
Chair:	Dawn Falsinotti	
Vice Chair:	Joseph Scafetta Jr.	
<u>Scholarship & Charity:</u>		<u>Publicity Committee:</u>
Chair:	Joseph Scafetta Jr.	Chair: Joseph Scafetta Jr.
Vice Chair:	Ray Stoll	
<u>Membership:</u>		<u>Italian Language Group:</u>
Chair:	Michael Gering	Contact: Dennis Ferrara dennisferrara@hey.com

Lodge Members Serving on the Grand Council of Virginia:

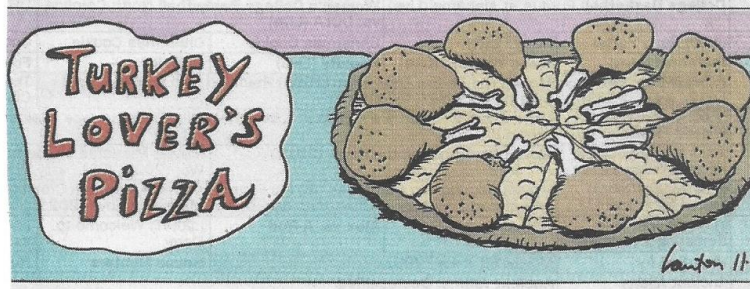
Joseph Scafetta Jr., Former State President and Trustee
Steven Kramer, Recording Secretary
Coletta Sciscilo, Trustee
Joseph Scafetta III, Trustee

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Sonny's Funnies

CHIX

BANNERMAN, XUNISE, KONAR, LAWTON,



DUSTIN

STEVE KELLEY & JEFF



CLASSIC PEANUTS

CHARLES SCHULZ



BRIAN CRANE



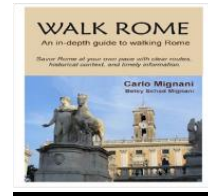
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CARLO AND BETSY MIGNANI have written a valuable guide to assist tourists who want to explore the Eternal City on their own with historical context and timely information. Available on Amazon, search “Walk Rome Mignani.”
www.walk-rome.com



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