

# Italian-American CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA



NEWSLETTER  
MAY/JUN 2024

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Paolo Bartesaghi



*Salve a tutti e spero che tutto presegua per il meglio per Voi e le Vostre famiglie.*

Hello to all of you and I hope all is going for the best for you and your family.

The excessive heat and then the sudden coolness of these past weeks brought to mind the change in seasons and switching out our winter wardrobe for our summer clothes as my parents and relatives did every spring. One thought in particular comes to mind that my grandmother always said, "There is no need to change your silk clothes since silk can be worn year-round." Thus, as my President's Corner, I'd like to write about this incredible fabric which is especially popular in the area where I grew up.

Italy is renowned for its elegant and high-quality silk for generations, and it has been part of Italy's cultural heritage for centuries. Italian silk is used in industries such as fashion and home décor. Its history and how it came to Italy is quite interesting. The Greeks and Romans were known to import silk from China and India. By the 6th century AD, Italy had already become a center for silk production. By the 13th century, silk production had spread throughout Italy and cities including Florence, Venice, and Milan became major centers for the industry.



Como, in northern Italy, has become the major center for Italian silk production and most of the Italian fashion designers rely on this city for much of the silk that they use.



There are legends regarding how the silk production arrived in Italy, but the accepted story is that, during the 6th century, silkworms were smuggled out of China in bamboo canes and brought to the eastern Mediterranean by merchants who disguised themselves as priests. They arrived first in Sicily and began breeding the silkworms. This soon spread north to the Peninsula.

*continued*

## FRIENDS OF THE CENTER

Societa' Vittoria Italiana  
www.vittorialodge.com

Society of Italian Americans  
www.siadm.com

Italian-American Women of IA  
www.italianamericanwomenofiowa.com  
Italian Folk Dancers

## GRANT SUPPORTERS



## STAY IN THE KNOW



www.iaccofia.org

# *Sneak Peek.....*

## THE COURTYARD



Additions to the Butler mansion over time created a fully enclosed courtyard at the center of the complex. By removing a portion of the existing addition, the courtyard can be reimagined as a public amenity that recalls the historic Italian tradition of central courtyards in large homes. The courtyard will now become the primary entry point for the complex, with all elements conveniently accessible directly from that central space. The flexible courtyard space will accommodate outdoor seating for the café, serve as an outdoor event space and feature outdoor sculptures for the museum.

*Italian-American*  
CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA

Soaring to New Heights

## AROUND THE CENTER

by Patricia Civitate

For the second year, due to restorations in our facilities, our Feast of St. Joseph observance has had a different look. On Sunday, March 17th, we provided a drive through donation area in our north parking lot. In keeping the St. Joseph tradition alive, we accepted drive-by gifts of non-perishable food items, fresh fruits and vegetables and cash donations for families in need. These items were then distributed to the St. Joseph Emergency Family Center, Bidwell Riverside Center, and the Food Bank of Iowa.

In addition to our sincere thanks, all donors received a booklet which contained an explanation of the observance and recipes for traditional cookies and breads. Also included was a gift bag containing a St. Joseph medal, prayer card and "lucky" fava bean.



Feast of St. Joseph volunteers Frank Cordaro, Gloria Stefani, Joanne Miller and Victoria Leverich

In Italy, Father's Day is celebrated on the feast of St. Joseph. A Father's Day card, along with a blessed bread, was also given to all donors.



Fr. Anthony Aiello blesses the bread for the Feast of St. Joseph

Special thanks are extended to the following contributors:

Brandan Comito and Capital City Fruit for their donation of fresh fruits and vegetables and their generous support of our St. Joseph Altar and related projects since 1984.

Tumea and Sons Restaurant for their donation of the breads that were blessed and given to donors.

Gary "Bubba" Fatino for allowing our volunteers the use of Scornovacca's Ristorante to prepare two large pans of Vegetable Frittata. Frank Cordaro brought these to share at the Catholic Worker House.

The Board of Directors and the members of the Heritage Advisory Council of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa would like to thank our volunteers and everyone participating this year. We look forward to 2025 and a return to our St. Joseph Altar presentation.

## WE REFLECT AND REMEMBER

Sally A. Ades  
Frances Ulrich  
JoAnn Walker  
Michael Anthony Marasco, Sr.





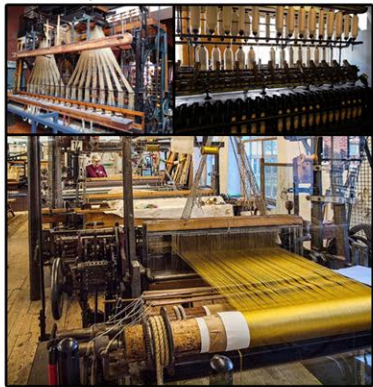
Geography plays a crucial role in the silk industry and the Como region lent itself perfectly to silk production mainly due to two important factors: an ample water supply (which Como has from Lake Como and the nearby Alpine streams) and mulberry farming (which thrived in the area to the south called the Po River Valley). It's interesting to note that, although the silkworm will eat just about anything, it can only produce silk if it consumes mulberry. Credit of establishing Como as a silk producer goes to the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, the gentleman who commissioned Leonardo da Vinci to create his famous Last Supper painting. During the 15th century, Ludovico had mulberry trees planted all around Lake Como and encouraged the rearing of silkworms. Needless to say, it didn't take long for cities in the area to flourish in the production of silk. By the 18th century, Como had become Italy's largest silk producer and the industry saw another boost in 1869 with the foundation of the Setificio Paolo Carcano, a prestigious school for silk craftsmen. This school trained the most talented of Italy's silkmasters and is still in operation today. By 1972, Como outproduced both China and Japan.

Silk is an extremely complex product to craft. Its production requires many stages. The silkworms must be bred and once each worm has stopped growing, it produces a very thin thread which then wraps around itself,

creating a cocoon. This single piece of thread must then be unwound and is normally over 4,000 feet long. This one thread will then be joined with others in order to become a thread that is strong enough to be used in the textile industry. Today, Como annually produces 3,200 tons of silk that represents 85% of all silk made in Italy and 70% of European production.

Italian silk is used in a variety of industries, from high fashion to home décor. Italian designers such as Gucci, Prada, and Versace are known for their use of luxurious silk fabrics in their collections. Italian silk is also used in the production of scarves, ties, and other accessories. In addition to fashion, Italian silk is used in home décor including upholstery, curtains, and bedding. The silky-smooth texture of the fabric, and its ability to reflect light, make it a popular choice for creating an elegant and luxurious look. Italian silk is available in a range of styles and designs, from classic solid colors to intricate patterns and prints. The fabric can be dyed in a variety of shades and hues, from vibrant jewel tones to soft pastels.

- Italian silk is known for its luster and sheen, which is due to the unique way it is woven. The fabric is woven with a high number of threads per inch, which gives it a smooth and shiny surface.
- Italian silk is often blended with other fabrics, such as cotton or wool, to create unique textures and patterns.
- Italian silk is prized for its durability and longevity. Properly cared for, silk fabrics can last for decades.
- The silk industry in Italy is highly regulated, with strict quality standards enforced to ensure the highest level of quality and craftsmanship.
- Silk production in Italy is a highly skilled trade, and many of the weavers and artisans involved in the industry come from families with generations of experience.

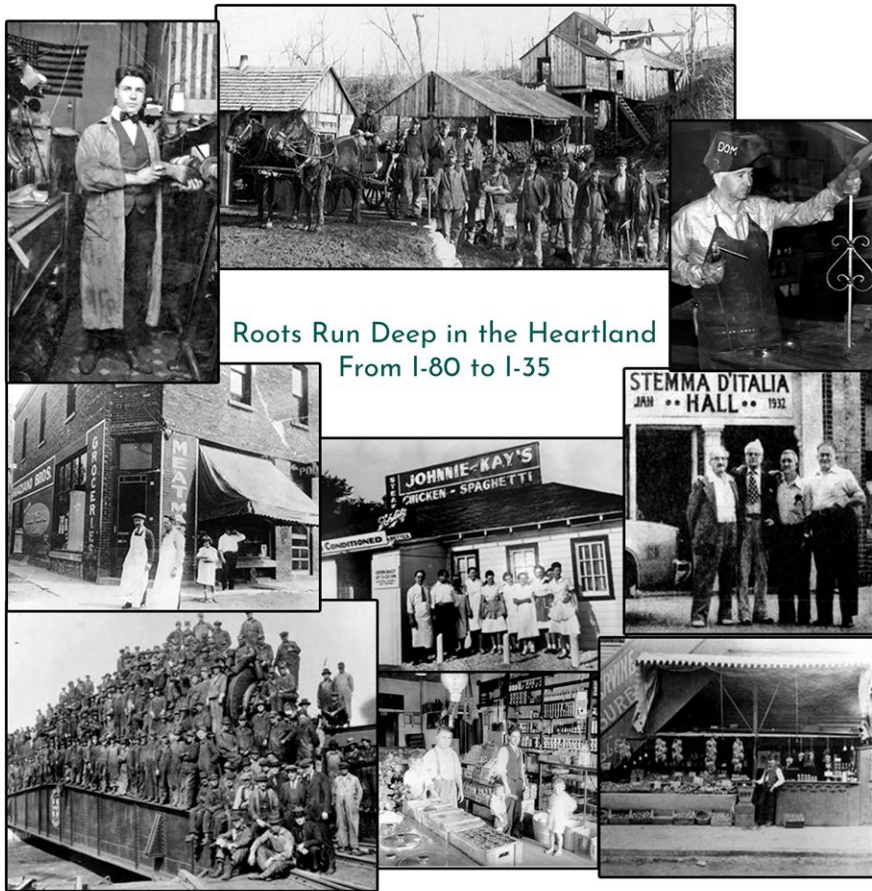


I hope you found this information interesting. As always, thank you for your continued support of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa as we spread Italian culture throughout the community.

*Did you know?*

49,449 Iowans

1.7% of Iowans identify as Italian-American according to the 2020 Census



Roots Run Deep in the Heartland  
From I-80 to I-35

Preserving and promoting this heritage through exhibits, educational programs, and cultural events, our center will showcase the history, tradition, and achievement of Italian-Americans in Iowa.

## THEY MADE US BETTER

by Susan DeFazio

By 1915, around 13 million Italians had migrated from Italy to the United States. This wave of migration gave rise to a distinct subculture. Italian immigrants established their own tight-knit communities, each revolving culturally around their hometown in Italy. Within these communities, newcomers embarked on a journey to build new lives, adapt to a new language, and assimilate into American society, all while preserving and sharing their rich native culture. Their dedication to hard work and aspiration for advancement were instrumental in weaving Italian culture seamlessly into the tapestry of American life. Their industrious spirit not only enriched the nation but also played a vital role in its continuous improvement. They made us better.

As waves of Italians came through Ellis Island, they brought their love of food with them. Today, Italian food is unquestionably one of the most popular of all ethnic foods. This delicious cuisine has changed the way people eat today. Everything from pizza to meatballs to marinara sauce can be credited to the Italian way of life. One of the earliest meals that Italians introduced was chicken tetrazzini, which is still a popular dish today. Items like Louisiana's popular muffuletta sandwich can be traced back to rolls baked in Sicily that were given to workers. And Philadelphia's famous cheesesteak sandwich also hails from Italy.

Even Americans' language has been heavily influenced by Italian culture. For example, they use many Italian words in music, such as soprano, alto, piano, and violin. You'll also hear many Italian words to refer to food, such as calamari, macaroni, tiramisu, pasta, and biscotti. We all know that a barista is a person who makes your coffee in a place like Starbucks, where you'll also find Italian words to denote every drink size. These words have become a part of our everyday language.

In addition to language and food, Italians brought with them a rich history and understanding of art and culture. From famous sculptors and painters to opera singers, Italy already had its fair share of talent before its people began to immigrate to America. With the popularity of entertainment growing, many Italians shared their talent with others. An Italian-American by the name of Frank Capra went on to direct more than 20 feature films. Other famous Italian-American filmmakers include Francis Ford Coppola, Sergio Leone and Martin Scorsese. Actors like Sylvester Stallone, Al Pacino, Joe Pesci, Robert DeNiro, Sophia Loren, and Marisa Tomei have made an impact on the big screen. Singers like Liza Minelli, Ariana Grande, Frank Sinatra, and Tony Bennett have all earned fame in the world of music. The impact of Italy and its people is seen, heard, and felt far and wide in every form of media.

Sports like soccer, car racing, and even skiing are all popular activities that have long been revered in Italy. Soccer's popularity has grown, and today, there are millions of fans in America, largely due to the influence of Italian immigrants. Many famous athletes have had Italian roots, including legendary baseball player Joe DiMaggio, who has often been hailed as one of the greatest players of all time. Other famous Italian-Americans include Tommy Lasorda, Yogi Berra, and Joe Torre, former manager of the New York Yankees. Famed Olympian Mary Lou Retton is also of Italian descent. From boxing and football to golfing and figure-skating, Italians have played an important role in American sports.

Italians have added value to every sphere of American life for centuries, including the fields of science, medicine and technology where they brought remarkable reforms, built foundations for scientific research, and made many scientific inventions. Enrico Fermi, Louis Ignarro and Rita Levi-Montalcini, all Noble prize winners, made significant contributions in the fields of physiology, quantum theory, medicine and nuclear physics.

Italian influence on American culture is everywhere, from the Supreme Court to the National Academy of Sciences to the National Basketball Association. It's hard to imagine our country without these influences.

Thank goodness, we don't have to!



## IN OUR LIBRARY

When browsing through our library looking for a book to read and write about, I came across the book *East End Italian*, by Bill Mori. Thinking I was going to be reading about a large Italian community in New York or some other large city, I was surprised to find that the events in this book took place in Fort Dodge, Iowa, during the 1950s.

Mr. Mori writes about many things that will resonate with Italians everywhere. (I'll bet even some non-Italians.)

Donna Vincenza, the ageless, shapeless creature who drifted in and out of community life, reminded me of a man who was always present in the neighborhood, that few knew much about and the children feared. The Knights of the Altar and the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, so much like the one I grew up in, hold many memories for him and for me. He tells of the brother/sister conflicts that most families can connect with and the risky activities he and his friends engaged in. One of Mr. Mori's fondest memories is of the Sunday dinners at Nonna's in Lehigh, where all of the family, at least those that lived close enough, were present. This was where cousins got to visit and play with cousins, and stories abounded.

One of his favorite stories was about all of the challenges Nonna faced on her trip to America. This story was repeated many times to the delight of all the children.

This is a short book and an easy read. I found it entertaining and it reminded me of my time growing up in an Italian family. I think you'll enjoy it too.



**Bella Italia Day Camp**  
July 31 - August 4  
9:00AM - 12:00PM

Games Crafts  
Language  
Cooking Dancing

An interactive day camp designed for children ages 6-12 to have fun while learning about all things Italian. Presented by Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa 2633 Fleur Dr., Des Moines IA 50321 \$60 per camper

More & Dads leave the children with us and enjoy your adult time!

Register at [www.iaccofia.org/eventbrite.com](http://www.iaccofia.org/eventbrite.com)

more info: 515-250-8804  
Pat Civitate, [civitate@iaccofia.org](mailto:civitate@iaccofia.org)  
Therese Riordan, [riordan@iaccofia.org](mailto:riordan@iaccofia.org)



**A Symphony OF FLAVORS**

Wednesday, May 8th  
6:30pm  
Lucca  
420 E Locust St  
Des Moines IA

Reservations at:  
[www.iaccofia.org](http://www.iaccofia.org)

Contact:  
[Barutta@iaccofia.org](mailto:Barutta@iaccofia.org)

Presented by: **Italian-American CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA**



## PALM TREES..... IN MILAN?

by Paolo Bartesaghi



The palm tree is one of the oldest symbols of Milan, and it has an interesting story. The age-old controversy became well known when Starbucks, which managed the flowerbeds in Piazza Duomo, decided to plant palm trees.

Some even went so far as to try to burn the plants. Social media was invaded by sterile controversies from people who believed there was no connection with Milan. Instead, it would be enough to know our history and go back in time to disprove the opinions, and demonstrate that the American company, after studies, decided to abandon them not by chance. It was 1600 when, at the behest of Cardinal Federico Borromeo, a large palm tree

was created in copper and bronze, and was installed in the exact point where, according to Leonardo da Vinci's calculations, the true center of Milan was to be considered!

The large palm tree was recognized as symbolically being the "zero point" of Milan! In a map of the Codex Atlanticus, according to Da Vinci, the real hub of the city was not Piazza Duomo but the nearby Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, a stone's throw away. More precisely, the point where his crypt still stands. That point is the navel of ancient Milan and the Roman civitas, both in geographical and ethical-moral terms, as the exact copy of Christ's tomb, built in 1100, is depicted in the crypt.



The palm, therefore, became one of the most important symbols in memory of the civitas, and has always been recognized as such.

Palms, which among other things have been present for hundreds of years throughout the Lombardy region, especially on the shores of Lombardy lakes, as well as being present in numerous villas of delight and historic homes in general.

The ancient artifact was the subject of restoration in 2018, it was once exhibited in the center of the courtyard of the Spiriti Magni at the Ambrosiana, then returned to the crypt, now exhibited on the steps of the museum itself; once upon a time the sculpture even served as a fountain, in fact a bold and avant-garde mechanism allowed the emission of droplets of water which slowly fell from the leaves creating a gentle tinkling sound.





## CASERTA

by Paolo Bartesaghi

The perfect off-the-beaten-path destination! This small town, 40 minutes by car from Naples, apart from having some of the world's best pizza, is home for the so rightly called Versailles of Italy. Caserta was originally called Casertavecchia and established on its current site in the sixteenth century. Casertavecchia was built on the Roman town of Casa Irta, meaning "home village located above" and later renamed Caserta.

The Royal Palace of Caserta is one of the most grandiose of Italy's royal residences. It was commissioned by the Bourbon King Charles III in 1752 and built by Luigi Vanvitelli. The nearly 475,000 square foot palace comprises 1,200 rooms, 1,742 windows, and four courtyards.

Some of the highlights include the Stairwell of Honor, the sumptuously decorated Royal Apartments, Throne Rooms, the Royal Chapel, a Theatre, a Library, and a precious collection of antique Neapolitan nativity scene figures. The Royal Palace has been the set for several films including Star Wars: Episode - The Phantom Menace, Star Wars II - Attack of the Clones, Angels & Demons, and Mission Impossible 3.

Annexed to the Royal Palace is the Royal Park, which was also designed by Luigi Vanvitelli. Throughout the 300-acre complex you can admire esplanades, formal gardens, ornate fountains, the Large Fish Livery, the Miniature Castle, a botanical garden referred to as the "English Garden," an Open Air Theater and a magnificent waterfall, which Vanvitelli himself enriched with many sculptures of Roman gods, goddesses and realistic animals.

The Royal Palace and its park were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997.

An interesting fact, at the end of World War II, the royal palace served as the seat of the Supreme Allied Commander. The first Allied war trial took place here in 1945 and the German General Anton Dostler was sentenced to death and executed nearby in Aversa.

Pope Francis visited Caserta on June 28, 2014, and apologized for the complicity of some Catholics in the persecution of Protestant Pentecostals during the fascist regime in Italy.



## ITALIAN AMERICAN WOMEN OF IOWA (IAWI)

MAY/JUNE  
NEWSLETTER

Monthly Meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of the month!

### Membership Dues:

If you would like to join IAWI, it is \$25 for members under 65, \$15 for seniors 65-74, and 75 and older are Life Members and have free membership. If you have any questions or need a membership form, please contact Teresa Russo at (515) 371-9280 or visit our website [ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com](http://ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com).

### Cheer and Sympathy:

If you would like a card sent to one of our members, contact Susan Witt at (321) 239-6002.

### Stay tuned for upcoming events and volunteer opportunities!

• We're trying something new for our members this year! We're offering free 2025 membership for the member that had the most volunteering in 2024.

### Important Upcoming Dates:

- May 8th - "A Symphony of Flavors" dinner a Lucca presented by Italian American Cultural Center of Iowa
- June 25th meeting will be our Ice Cream Social and we encourage you to bring a guest.
- June 30th is the deadline to apply for the \$500 Scholarship. Details available on our website [ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com](http://ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com)

### Follow us for information on what's happening for IAWI!

- Facebook - lawi IA
- Instagram - italianamericanwomenofiowa

## FRIENDS OF THE CENTER

On Earth Day, the Italian American Women of Iowa dedicated time to caring for our courtyard as a tribute to the environment.

Thank you for making the IACC the recipient of your efforts.



## VITTORIA LODGE AUXILIARY

*Benvenuta Primavera— It's that beautiful time of year when the flowers bloom, the birds sing and the evening light stays around a bit longer.*

It's also the time we finalize the details regarding the annual June dinner for all Vittoria Lodge members. This will be held on Saturday, June 8th with appetizers beginning at 5:00 followed by dinner and entertainment. During this event we will be commemorating our dear deceased members who have passed between October 2022-June 1st 2024. This will take the place of the Memorial Mass which has previously always been held in November.

**Reservations are required** for the evening and can be made by calling Lesa Blasco at 515-306-3730 between May 1st and June 1st.

The cavatelli dinner, held in March, served over 1000 people, and the bake sale sold out of all the delicious goodies. We would like to thank everyone who supported this event. It's always a fun time working alongside the men to make this a successful day and seeing familiar faces.

At the sauce competition, held in April, George Thompson was the winning chef!

We have just completed a day of cleaning up at the lodge. Afterwards, we enjoyed a spaghetti dinner before our meetings.

Hope to see all members at the dinner on the 8th!

Deb Fleishman  
President, Vittoria Lodge Auxiliary

# Societa' Vittoria Italiana

## Next Men's Meeting May 19th @ 2:00 pm

**MONTHLY MEETING:** Haven't been to a monthly lodge meeting in a while? Please mark your calendars and join us!

**JUNE DINNER:** Will be held on **Saturday June 8th starting at 5pm** with a social hour and dinner to follow. Tumea and Sons Restaurant will cater the dinner. A social event will follow the dinner and program that you will not want to miss. Make your reservations with Lisa Blasco @ 515-306-3730 by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Men, don't forget to attend the Men's Annual Meeting on June 9th at 10 am.

**LODGE SHELTER:** The lodge outdoor shelter, which includes tables, grill and fire pit area, is a great place for family and friends to socialize now that the weather is nicer. Open to all members. Contact A.J. at 515-971-6711 if you would like to reserve.

**CAVATELLI DINNER:** Thank you to everyone who supported the Cavatelli Dinner! We served over 1,000 meals and the proceeds will fund the Lodge scholarship program.

**SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS:** The Lodge and Auxiliary Memberships will be sponsoring its annual scholarship program for eligible students planning to attend college in the Fall of 2024 and related to a Lodge or Auxiliary member. Included in your newsletter is a scholarship application. The application is due June 1, 2024. The recipients of the scholarship awards will be announced at the June Dinner (June 8, 2024).

**TONINI FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP:** If you are a member of the Lodge or Auxiliary and you have a son, grandson, daughter or granddaughter attending Dowling Catholic High School in the Fall of 2024, the lodge is sponsoring a scholarship through the Tonini Family Scholarship program. Contact Randy Prati at 515-321-8941 for more information.

**PRAYER READING:** As part of the funeral protocol, the member's (men or women) family will need to ask if they want the ceremony prayer read at the visitation or cemetery.

**HAPPY MAY BIRTHDAY WISHES TO OUR MEMBERS:** Aldo Lombardi, Derek Blatt, Joe Tumea, Spencer Prati, David Ballantini, Jerry Battani, Dana Bertogli, Amedeo Rossi, Michael Fontana, Danny Carzoli, Dennis Carzoli, Douglas Stefani, Todd Cruchelow, Squire Hutcheson, Michael Gentosi, Robert Stefani, and Anthony Medici **Buon Compleanno!**

**HAPPY JUNE BIRTHDAY WISHES TO OUR MEMBERS:** Frank Sarcone, Aldo Medici, Louie Butelli, Duane Lombardi, Brad Battani, Ron Carzoli, George Partington III, Victor Scaglione, William Stefani, George Thompson, Jerry Sebben, Roger Stefani Jr., Gary Stefani, and Ron Stefani **Buon Compleanno!**

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

May 19th - Lunch Social @ 12:30pm; Lodge Meeting @ 2:00pm

June 8th - June Dinner @ 5:00pm Social hour, dinner, program & social event. Make your reservations with Lisa Blasco @ 515-306-3730 by June 1st.

June 9th - Annual Lodge Meeting @ 10:00am



# Societa Vittoria Italiana

Vittoria Lodge  
P. O. Box 1212  
Ankeny, Iowa 50021-0975

## Scholarship Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

College Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Lodge or Auxiliary Member Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Member \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation date if in High School \_\_\_\_\_

School ( Plan on ) attending \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLETE mailing address of school / department the check will be sent to:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

### Deadline is JUNE 1

No Applications will be accepted at the June dinner

**This is the ONLY Official form to be used for 2024 applications.**

If the college like, U of I, requires any additional paperwork to be submitted with the check, you are to submit the completely form filled out with your application.

Please submit photo with application  
( please include applicant's name on back of photo )

### Send Applications to:

Vittoria Lodge  
P. O. Box 1212  
Ankeny, Iowa 50021-0975