

# Italian-American CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA

Newsletter

MAY/JUNE 2026



## From The Chair

*A Community Taking Shape*

Dear Friends,

This spring, I've found myself thinking a lot about connection—what it means, where it comes from, and how we sustain it over time.

At its core, the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa has always been about just that. Not just a building, not just a collection of programs—but a place where people come together through shared experiences, traditions, and stories.

Over the past month, we've seen that spirit in action. Whether it was an evening of laughter and conversation at our recent wine event, the continued engagement of our partner organizations, or the early planning for programs that will introduce younger generations to Italian culture—each moment reflects something bigger than the individual event itself. It reflects a community that is alive, growing, and connected.

What excites me most is that we are just getting started.

As we continue to build toward the opening of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa, our focus remains clear: to create a space where these connections can thrive—across generations, across backgrounds, and across experiences. A place where culture is not only preserved, but lived.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your support, your participation, and your belief in this vision are what make all of this possible.

Warmly,

### Jeff Lamberti, Board Chair

Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa



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# Neumann Brothers' Construction Update



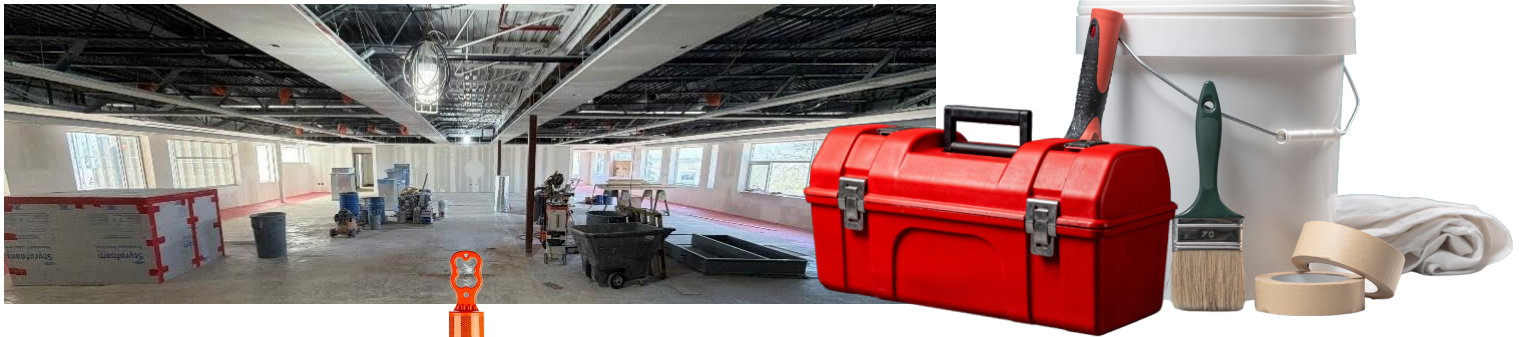
As we look ahead to opening, progress continues steadily on the physical space that will bring this vision to life.

Work is well underway at the new Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa as crews begin the interior finish stage of the project.

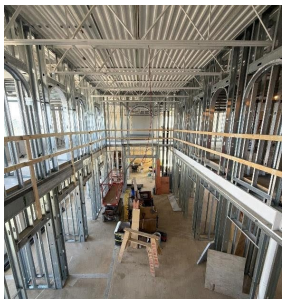
Exterior sitework has completed major milestones with storm and utility infrastructure in place as crews prepare for hardscaping and site retaining walls, with landscape work to follow this fall. Major MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing) infrastructure work has recently been completed, including HVAC installation, electrical conduit and wiring, and fire alarm system rough-ins.

Work will be moving quickly as crews continue toward the scheduled completion this fall.

Event space interior finishes are in progress, with drywall complete, painting underway, and lighting installation beginning in late April. Audio-visual rough-ins and fire sprinkler work are nearing completion ahead of final finishes this summer.



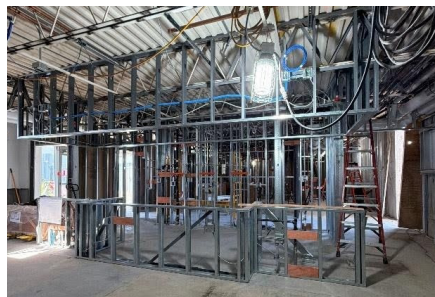
In the pre-function addition within the courtyard, crews have completed the steel structure, masonry elevator shaft, roofing, and interior concrete slab. Crews are currently preparing to install the multi-story glass wall system on the exterior.



Much progress is being made in the museum space, including full framing of the two-story interior street connecting the 1st and 2nd floors. A skylight will be installed over this area later this summer. Restroom finishes are in progress, with wall and floor tile nearing completion.



Courtyard and sitework continues through early summer with utility work, electrical conduits, sub-grade preparation for paving, electrical transformer upgrades, and final grading.



In the cooking classroom and commercial kitchen, all walls have been framed, major MEP rough-ins are nearing completion, and finishes are slated to begin in the coming weeks.

# In Our Library

*While the building takes shape, so does the cultural experience that will live within it—rooted in learning, storytelling, and shared knowledge.*

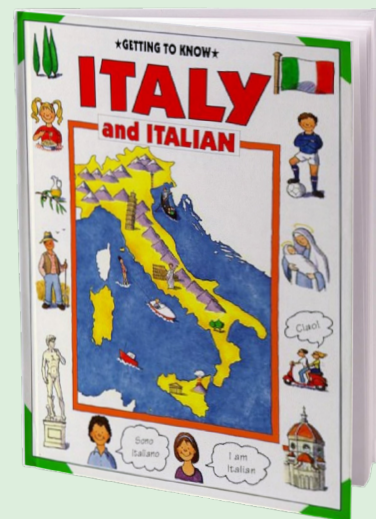
The book I've chosen to share this month is *Getting to Know Italy and Italian*, written by Emma Sansone and Kim Wooley.

The book is written and illustrated for children, but there are many facts that would be of interest to adults as well.

In this book, you will find an illustrated guide to the country of Italy. This includes Italian towns, countryside, and famous places. You can also learn about the Italian people and their way of life. I found the page about the lives of Italian children especially interesting.

The section of the book that deals with speaking Italian presents words and short phrases in sections titled *Making Friends*, *At the Café*, and *At the Shops*. There is also an index and a pronunciation key for the Italian words.

The illustrations are simple and colorful and add to the charm of the book. I think young and old alike will enjoy it.



# From The Table To Tradition

*Paolo Bartesaghi*

*One of the most powerful ways culture is carried forward is through food—through the stories, traditions, and memories that come with it.*

## The History of Stracciatella

*Ciao a tutti*

*Certo che questo tempo e' un po' pazzarello ma a tutti puo' venir la voglia di un gelato.*

*Hi to all of you.*

*It's most certain that this weather is a little crazy but this can give everybody the desire for a gelato.*

*I would like to tell you the history of one of the more popular Italian gelato flavors: la stracciatella.*

*In Bergamo, a gelato was born from a soup (and today it is famous all over the world)*

*From Porta Sant'Alessandro to the La Marianna bar, the history of Stracciatella spans a century: a simple intuition, a name that has remained the same everywhere and a recipe that has never changed.*

There is a medieval gate in Bergamo Alta that looks but is not the same as the others. It is called Porta Sant'Alessandro, and under its arches, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a peasant woman named Marianna sold raw milk. No one would have imagined that the name of the most famous restaurant in the city would come from that figure. And that from that bar, half a century later, one of the most replicated flavors of ice cream in the world would come out, untranslatable on the menus of Moscow and New York. "Stracciatella is not translated into other languages," Niccolò Panattoni, grandson of the founder creator of the iconic flavor, tells *Gambero Rosso*, "a bit like pizza or espresso." A goal that his grandfather Enrico, who arrived from Tuscany in Bergamo with one hundred and eighty thousand lire in his pocket, would never have imagined.

*(continued.)*



La Marianna Bar



# From The Table To Tradition (continued)

To understand La Marianna, we must first understand Enrico Panattoni. Tuscan, the son of peasants, when he arrived in Bergamo after the war he had everything in mind except ice cream. He wanted to make castagnaccio, the poor man's cake of his region, and sell it at the markets of the North. He found a small place in Via Colleoni, in the heart of the Upper Town, and there he started.

The art of the ice cream maker came later, learned in Florence through an acquaintance. It was then that the trajectory of his life began to change. He came into contact with the café under Porta Sant'Alessandro, where the owner was looking for someone to produce ice cream for him. He accepted, worked there in the evenings for months and, when the lady decided to sell, it was his wife who persuaded him to take over the place. "It was my grandmother who convinced my grandfather," says Niccolò, "and so in November 1953 La Marianna was born," keeping the name that this area had carried with it for generations.

It took eight years for that bar to become a legend thanks to his Stracciatella. Not a project, but the result of an observation of the Easter period. Enrico had plenty of chocolate to melt, his Carpigiani machines and in his head an image that came from upstairs, because in the meantime La Marianna had grown up. Next to the ice cream parlor, he had also opened a restaurant. And the dish that was most popular was stracciatella in broth, that poor soup in which the beaten egg, poured into boiling broth, congeals into many small irregular filaments.

In order to render the consistency of this dish in an ice cream, it was necessary to think in reverse. Pouring the chocolate with the vertical machine moving, in fact, the heat dispersed it into the cream, coloring it all. The solution was counterintuitive. "If you stopped the machine, poured the chocolate over it, the base remained intact," says Niccolò, "and it meant that once it started it could tear the chocolate into many small pieces." "Surely someone before my grandfather threw chocolate on top of milk - he admits - but not in this form and with this name. The real intuition was to give it the name that derives from the Roman stracciatella.

The three Carpigiani machines from 1961 are still there, producing 12 pounds of Stracciatella at a time and have never been replaced. The result is an ice cream that Niccolò defines with a smile as "not in step with the times". Thick, sugary, not very airy. "My grandfather used to say that ice cream must be sweet," he says. "If you told him he wasn't sweet enough, it was trouble."

The only variable over time has been chocolate. Perugina's Luisa roof, the original one, went out of production. Callebaut followed and then Lindt 58% dark, the current one, "neither sweet nor too bitter". Every variation has been noticed and commented on by historical customers. "There are still those who come to say that the one before was better," confesses the co-owner. The recipe, however, has remained intact. Milk, cream, sugar, eggs. Ingredients that for more than sixty years have given ice cream a consistency that resembles no other.

Perhaps this is also why out of ten ice creams sold at Marianna, eight are Stracciatella. An absolute domination that says everything about the relationship between this place and its symbolic taste. In 2017 that loyalty also became an official recognition. The brand "La Stracciatella, il gelato di Bergamo", promoted by local ice cream makers, has codified ingredients and method, including that fundamental step from fluid to solid chocolate that cannot be bypassed with already broken flakes. "We didn't pretend that the only one was ours," Niccolò points out. "We wanted to make it known as a taste linked to the city."

An ambition achieved, which over time has become greater. "Our goal today is to be able to take this story as far as possible," says Niccolò. "We have the desire to get out of Bergamo, maybe open something in Milan or be able to do something that can be distributed."

But expanding without betraying yourself is not easy. "It's complicated because it's a very artisanal ice cream, you have to figure out how to do it." Three carts of 12 pounds each do not leave much space. "It is not sustainable for us to produce tons of Stracciatella to be distributed all over the world. We have always been shopkeepers," says Niccolò. And this is, in the end, the true legacy of Grandfather Enrico. Not just a recipe, but a way of being, living one's profession, being on the market and telling one's story.

I hope you found this article interesting and have a chance to try this flavor of Italian gelato: stracciatella!

Thank you for your continued support of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa as we spread Italian culture throughout the community.



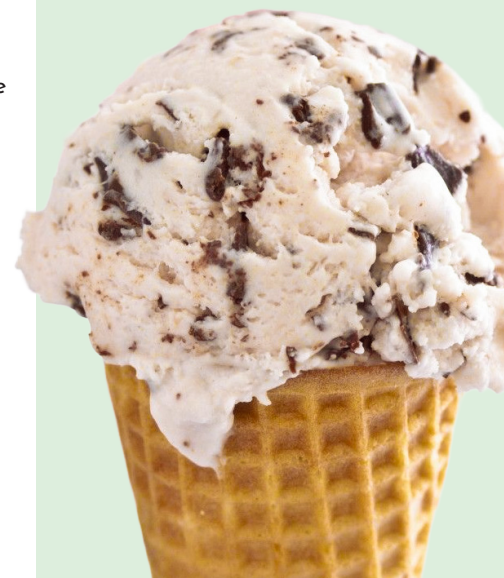
Enrico Panattoni preparing stracciatella



Stracciatella La Marianna



Carpigiani machines in the laboratories of La Marianna



# Events: Culture In Action

*These traditions are not only remembered—they are lived, shared, and celebrated together.*

## **Sapori di Primavera**

It was a great evening at Lucca on April 8 for Sapori di Primavera. More than 50 guests gathered to enjoy exceptional food, thoughtfully paired wines, and—most importantly—each other's company.

The laughter, conversation, and shared stories throughout the evening were a reminder of what makes this community so special.

A sincere thank you to the Lucca staff for their hospitality and to winemaker Enrico Mercato for the outstanding wines that made the evening even more memorable.

We look forward to continuing this tradition at **Sapori d'Estate on June 16 at Aposto.**

## **Children's Italian Day Camp**

### **Save The Date**

Children ages 6-12 are invited to join us for our upcoming Italian Day Camp, taking place **July 27-31.**

This experience is designed to introduce young participants to Italian culture through hands-on activities, language, food, and traditions.

Additional details will be shared soon. Please check our Facebook page, Eventbrite, and the July newsletter for updates.



# We Reflect And Remember

*As we celebrate and gather, we also take time to honor those who helped shape this community.*

## **Sofia Graziano**

## **Carl Schnobelen**

To remember a friend or loved one through a memorial contribution, please send a check to:

Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa - Memorials  
PO Box 4994  
Des Moines, Iowa 50305



# Our Community In Action

The Cultural Center is not just a place—it is a home for the organizations and traditions that already bring this community together.

## Italian American Women of Iowa (IAWI)



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

If you would like to join IAWI and need a membership form, or if you have any questions, please contact Lucrezia Moore at (515) 710-1247 or visit our website [ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com](http://ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com).

### **Membership Dues:**

\$25 for members under 65

\$15 for seniors ages 65-74

Ages 75 and older are Life Members with free membership

### **Cheer and Sympathy:**

If you would like a card sent to one of our members, contact Gracy Kirkman at (515) 321-7178.

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

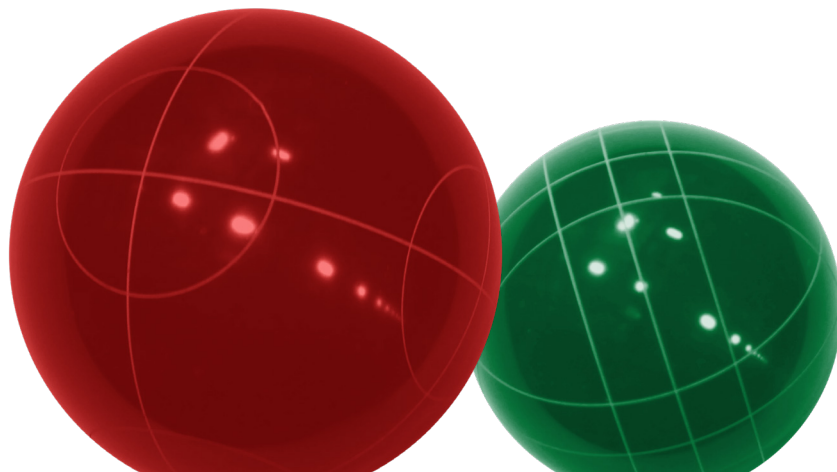
- We're looking to schedule some cooking classes in the near future- Let us know what you'd like to learn how to make. The cooking classes are free and just one of the benefits to being an IAWI member!

### **Important Upcoming Dates:**

- May 26th-Monthly meeting at Southside Senior Center (100 Payton Ave, 50315) at 6:30p
- May 31st- Scholarships entry deadline
- June 27th- IAWI Bocce Ball tournament at Tumea's
- July 28th- Annual Picnic

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

- Facebook - lawi IA
- Instagram - italianamericanwomenofiowa



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The Cultural Center is not just a place—it is a home for the organizations and traditions that already bring this community together.

## The Men And Women Of The Vittoria Lodge

“Spring has Sprung”...a time that brings a sudden shift to warmer weather, blooming nature, and a cultural pivot to outdoor living, including walking, picnics, and dining. We are all ready to get out and socialize! So, we are thrilled to have the following events on the lodge calendar and look forward to seeing everyone there. This is your invitation to come and share conversation, a meal, drink, and participate in the activities.

- May 17th Lunch and social beginning at noon, followed by a meeting at 2:00
- June 13th ANNUAL LODGE DINNER for all members beginning at 5:00; **reservations are required and can be made by calling Lesa at 515-306-3730 by June 5th.**
- June 14th Annual men’s meeting 10:00am-11:00am
- July 19th Lunch, provided by the lodge, at noon followed by Bocce Ball
- Aug. 16th Lunch at noon, provided by the lodge, followed by Bocce Ball
- Aug. 30th Lodge picnic at noon, lodge will provide the meat, sweet corn and drink. Please bring a dish to share.
- Sept. 20th Lodge meeting at 2:00, followed by polenta dinner-bring a topping
- Oct. 18th Lodge cleanup at 9:00, lunch at noon, meeting at 2:00
- Nov. 7th Auxiliary Holiday craft sale and pasta lunch
- Nov. 15th Lodge meeting at 2:00
- Dec. 11th PRESIDENT’S HOLIDAY PARTY at 6:00
- Dec. 19th Lodge meeting at 2:00

Thank you to everyone who supported and enjoyed the cavatelli dinner in March.



**Roger Fiori**  
**President, Vittoria Lodge**

**Deb Fleishman**  
**President, Vittoria Lodge Auxiliary**



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# With Gratitude to Our 2025 Gala Sponsors



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**(STOCK TRANSFER INSTRUCTIONS ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST FOR YOU OR YOUR BROKER)**

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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ OF THIS PLEDGE WILL BE PAID BY A MATCHING GIFT PROGRAM AT \_\_\_\_\_

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER!**