

Italian-American CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA

Newsletter

JUL/AUG 2026



A Message from Board Chair

Jeff Lamberti

As we move through the summer, I continue to be amazed by what this community has accomplished.

For many years, we have talked about creating a permanent home for Italian culture, heritage, education, and celebration in Iowa. Today, that vision is becoming a reality. Each time I walk through the building, I am reminded that this project was never simply about constructing a facility—it was about creating a place where families, friends, and future generations can gather, learn, celebrate, and connect.

The Italian American Cultural Center exists because of the passion, generosity, and commitment of so many individuals and families. Whether you have volunteered your time, shared your expertise, made a financial contribution, or simply believed in this vision from the beginning, you have helped make this moment possible. On behalf of our Board of Directors, thank you.

As construction continues and we prepare to open our doors, the excitement surrounding the Center grows every day. We are already envisioning the celebrations, educational programs, family gatherings, cultural events, and community experiences that will soon fill these spaces with life.

There is still much work to do, but there is also so much to celebrate. We are entering an exciting new chapter—not only for Italian Americans, but for all Iowans who value heritage, community, and the importance of preserving our shared stories for future generations.

Thank you for your continued support, your enthusiasm, and your belief in what we are building together. We look forward to welcoming you home.

Warm regards,

Jeff Lamberti, Board Chair

Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa

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Neumann Brothers' Construction Update



Construction progress is booming at the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa. Crews are busy with moving forward throughout the building. Interior finishes including paint, flooring, tile, lighting and plumbing trim out are well underway. Completed infrastructure work includes upgraded electrical, HVAC, fire sprinkler and major plumbing. The exterior of the building is being given a fresh coat of white paint. Roofing replacement and repairs have been recently completed. The crew are executing work to finish up on target this fall.

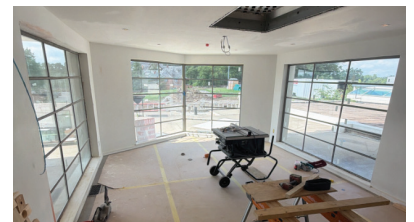
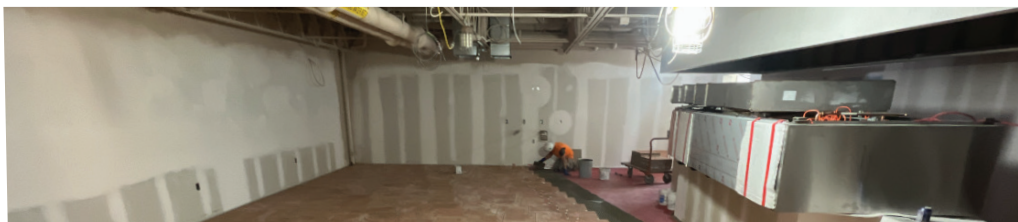
Glass curtain wall was recently installed at the Pre-function space. This area will be a light-filled hall that connects the Courtyard, Museum and Event's space. This will serve as a gather point for parties and social events. Installation of the elevator started in late June and is planned to take 6 weeks to complete.



Courtyard/Sitework is nearing major completion with concrete paving recently completed in late June followed by paver installation and site amenities in July and August. Final landscaping and planting will wait for cooler temperatures in September and August. Concrete site walls, stairs, drive lanes and sidewalks are the next major hurdle for completion this summer with crews recently completing major concrete pours at the new entry on the East side of the building.



In the cooking classroom/commercial kitchen interior finishes have started with tile flooring recently completed by crews from Des Moines Marble & Mantel. Exhaust hoods and HVAC tie-ins will be completed over the next few weeks with kitchen equipment arriving in August. Final build-out of millwork, painting, lighting and ceiling system will wrap up and we will be ready to start serving up some test meals.



The historic Bulter Masion restoration is slowly but surely being completed to ensure all requirements of a proper historical restoration are being followed. Existing steel windows are being restored, plaster walls and ceilings are being restored, historical lighting and millwork finishes will be repaired and updated for future use.

Welcome Aboard, Mallory Killian

The Italian American Cultural Center of Iowa is pleased to welcome former Iowa girl, **Mallory Killian**, as our Director of Sales & Marketing.

Mallory brings a strong background in hospitality, full-service catering, and venue management, with experience creating memorable guest experiences through thoughtful planning, exceptional service, and collaborative partnerships. Most recently, she worked with a nationally recognized Minneapolis-based catering company that was named **Caterer of the Year** by the International Caterers Association in 2025.

Throughout her career, Mallory has worked alongside industry leaders, designers, planners, and vendors to create events that foster connection, celebrate culture, and build community.

Her experience aligns naturally with the mission of the Italian American Cultural Center of Iowa, where hospitality, education, heritage, and community come together.

Beyond her professional experience, Mallory has a personal appreciation for architecture, design, and travel. She was drawn to the Center's beautiful architectural character and the opportunity to help create a welcoming space where people can gather, celebrate, and create lasting memories.

Please join us in welcoming Mallory to the Italian American Cultural Center family. She looks forward to meeting our members, supporters, and community partners as we prepare to open the doors to this extraordinary new cultural destination.

Contact:
mallory@iaccofia.org
(515) 518-0445



Upcoming Events

Bella Italia-Children's Day Camp

July 27-31, 2026 | 9:00 a.m.-Noon Daily

Join us for Bella Italia - Children's Day Camp, a five-day cultural adventure designed for children ages 6-12. Through hands-on activities, storytelling, music, art, food, language, and interactive experiences, campers will explore the rich traditions and vibrant culture of Italy while making new friends and creating lasting memories.

Whether your family has Italian roots or simply a love for Italian culture, Bella d'Italia offers a fun and engaging opportunity for children to learn, create, and celebrate together.

Space is limited, and registration is currently open. We look forward to welcoming the next generation of Italian Americans—and friends of Italian culture—for a memorable week of learning and discovery.



Building Our Legacy Together

Dear Friends,

Every family has a story. Every tradition, recipe, photograph, and treasured heirloom represents a thread in the rich tapestry of our Italian-American heritage. For generations, our families have built businesses, neighborhoods, churches, and communities throughout Iowa, leaving a legacy of hard work, faith, family, and perseverance.

Today, we have the extraordinary opportunity—and responsibility—to ensure those stories are preserved and shared for generations yet to come.

The Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa is more than a building. It is a promise: a promise that our history will be honored, our traditions celebrated, and our community strengthened through education, art, genealogy, culture, and connection.

As we move closer to opening our doors, we are turning our attention to the spaces, exhibits, artwork, and experiences that will bring our vision to life. From the museum galleries and educational displays to the artistic works that will inspire visitors for decades, every element of the Center will tell the story of who we are and what we value.

We invite you to become part of that story.

Any gift will directly support the development of our museum collections, cultural exhibits, and artistic installations, helping us create a destination that honors our past while inspiring our future.

Your investment will ensure that our children, grandchildren, and the broader community can experience and appreciate the profound contributions of Italian Americans in Iowa and beyond.

We know that meaningful places are not built by bricks and mortar alone. They are built by people who believe in preserving history, celebrating culture, and creating something that will endure.

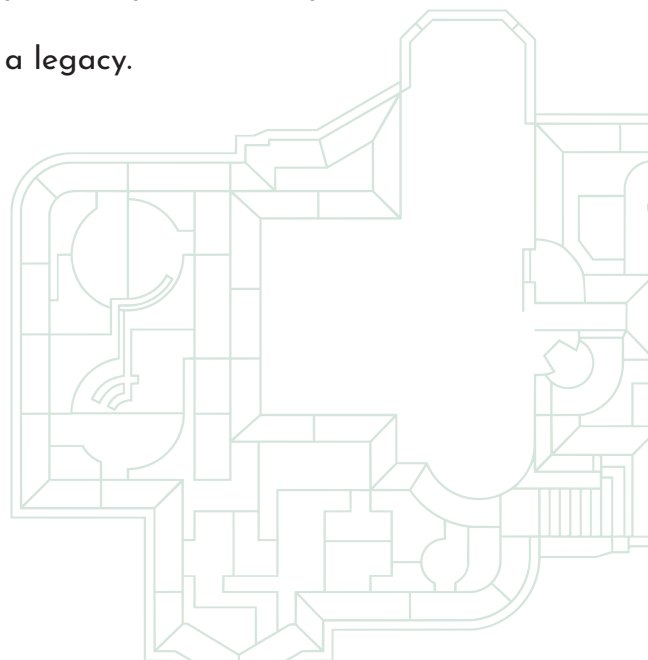
If the arts, culture, history, and heritage of our Italian American community have touched your life, we ask you to consider making a leadership contribution to help us complete this important work.

Together, we are not simply building a center. We are building a legacy.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Loretta Sieman

On behalf of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa



The Right to Vote in Italy Was Not Always Equal For Men and Women

Paolo Bartesaghi

Ciao a tutti! EccoVi un po' di storia di un antico Stato ed una giovane Repubblica.
Hello to all of you! Here is a little history about an old State and a young Republic.

This past June 2nd marked the 80th anniversary of when Italians voted to abolish the monarchy and establish the Italian Republic. Since 1946, June 2nd has been considered a national holiday as *zz* (Italian Republic Day). It is a day of celebration and offices, schools, and most businesses are closed.

However, June 2nd, 1946, marked an astonishing change in voting in Italy; it was the first time that women were able to cast a vote in an election. Italian men were granted the right to vote in 1912. The universal female suffrage was only approved in 1945 at the end of WWII. The decisive push came from the awareness that, after the crucial role played by women during the Resistance, it was no longer possible to exclude the female population from political life. To gain full eligibility, women had to wait until March 10, 1946, when the electoral law for the Constituent Assembly declared "Italian citizens who, on election day, have reached the age of 25" are eligible. The next scheduled voting day was for June 2, 1946, when, in addition for the monarchy-republic referendum, Italian men and women were also called to vote for the members of the Constituent Assembly.

The photographs of that day tell more than words.



Emotional faces, hands clutching voter cards, orderly lines in front of polling stations. Women, young and old, workers, teachers, housewives, farmers, and office workers all felt that the vote they were about to make was not just a right, but they had earned it. It was a recognition of a citizenship that had until then been denied by the institutions.

It is worth noting that women played a crucial role and influence in that first election: 12,998,131 women, compared to 11,949,056 male voters. It can also be stated that 21 women sat on the benches of the body as parliamentarians responsible for drafting the new Constitution of the Italian Republic. These 21 women consisted of 9 representing the communist party, 9 Christian Democrats, 2 socialists, and 1 from the Common Man's Front party. They were called "the Constituent Mothers" and, in those months, together with the men, they decided what the Republic would be like. Their names are: Adele Bei, Bianca Bianchi, Laura Bianchini, Elisabetta Conci, Filomena Delli Castelli, Maria Federici, Nadia Gallico Spano, Angela Gotelli, Angela Guidi Cingolani, Nilde Iotti, Teresa Mattei, Angiola Minella, Rita Montagnana, Lina Merlin, Maria Jervolino De Unterrichter, Maria Nicotra, Teresa Noce, Ottavia Penna Buscemi, Elettra Pollastrini, Maria Maddalena Rossi, and Vittoria Titomanlio. Fourteen of these had university degrees and some of them were part of The Resistance. All of them knew what it meant to fight in order to live. Five of these women (Maria Federici, Angela Gotelli, Nilde Iotti, Lina Merlin, and Teresa Noce) were part of the Commission of 75, the small group that were charged with formally writing the Constitution.

(Continued on the next page)

The Right to Vote in Italy Was Not Always Equal For Men and Women (continued)

Paolo Bartesaghi

Article 3 of the Constitution states: "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal under the law, without distinction of gender, race, language, religion....". The words "without distinction of gender" was added by Lina Merlin. Many of her colleagues thought these words were superfluous and that "all citizens" already included women. However, Lina reminded them of the French Revolution saying "In 1789 the rights of man and citizens were proclaimed in France. But this proclamation was idealistic since "citizen" only referred to men wearing pants". She won her battle and those words were added to the document.

The second comma of Article 3 states that it is the duty of the Republic to remove any obstacles that "actively" limits the liberty and equality of citizens. The word "actively" was added by Teresa Mattei who was the youngest of the 21 women. She was 25 years old and a partisan with a battle name of "Chicchi, captured by the Germans, abused, and survived". She demanded that "actively" be included because she knew that the equality on paper meant little, if in real life there is a promise that is never kept.

Italy's President Sergio Mattarella recently stated "A sign of a truly democratic transformation in our country came when women finally voted for the first time in 1946. A new path, based on peace, freedom, democracy, and social justice, enshrined in the Constitution that came into force on January 1, 1948."

That June of 1946, winning the right to be heard, was the culmination of decades of cultural, social, and political battles waged by citizens who demanded full recognition as such in a country that considered them merely household angels. It was the starting point for a more equal society.

I hope you found this article interesting and inspiring and I thank you for your continued support of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa as we spread Italian culture throughout the community.

Paolo Bartesaghi

Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa President



In Our Library

For this issue of the Newsletter, I found a charming book of recipes compiled by actor Dom DeLuise. The book is titled *Eat This... It'll Make You Feel Better!* The title is taken from words his mother spoke to him while growing up. It's what she said to him any time he was hurt, tired, sad, or in any way unhappy.

The Dedication, Preface, and a piece called Dear Reader gives insight into Dom's life and the reason behind compiling the recipes in this book. Along with his other reasons, he says he wrote the book because, as a comedienne, he enjoys making people happy and he knows these recipes will do just that.

Some recipes are those of his mother and other family members. He has also included recipes gathered from some of the celebrities he knew because of his many performances and travels. Not all of the recipes are for Italian foods, but all sound tasty. Many of them come with pictures of Dom or the friends he received recipes from.

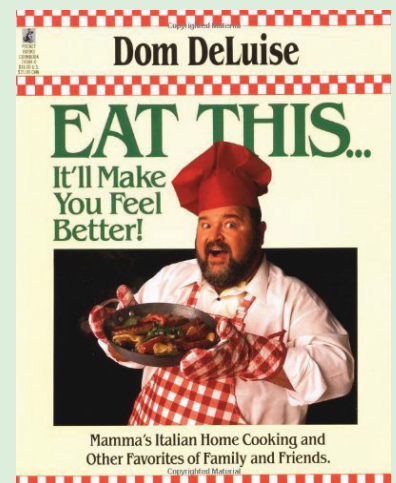
The book also contains stories of the DeLuise family. One excerpt I found interesting was called "Staying Pregnant". You'll have to read the story to learn what that means. Other stories in the book remind me of things that most Italian families will connect with, especially tasting the Sunday pasta sauce on a slice of bread. That was something that most of "us kids" did weekly.

Chapters in this book are:

Soup	Salad	Egg and Cheese	Poultry and Rabbit
Meat	Seafood	Bread	Desserts

Chapter come with an anecdote from Dom's childhood. They make for interesting reading.

Below you will find a recipe taken from his book. I had a difficult time choosing only one. I hope you'll enjoy trying it.



TITLE *Mama's Custard Italian Style*

DIRECTIONS

In a saucepan add sugar, eggs and cornstarch slowly adding the milk while stirring constantly over medium heat until just below boiling. Remove from heat and add 1 tablespoon of melted butter and the vanilla (or rum flavoring). Blend well. Pour into dessert dishes and chill.

This custard is perfect for the center layer of a sponge cake, sfogliatella, cannoli, or maybe even a cream puff.

Adding chocolate chips or melted chocolate is optional.

INGREDIENTS

- ☐ 1 cup sugar
- ☐ 2 eggs
- ☐ 1/2 cup corn starch
- ☐ 1 quart milk
- ☐ 1 tbsp melted butter
- ☐ 1 tsp vanilla (or rum flavoring)



Event Recap

Sapori d'Estate - Flavors of Summer

June 23, 2026

The Italian American Cultural Center community gathered on June 23 at Aposto at the Scala House for Saponi d'Estate - Flavors of Summer, an evening celebrating the flavors, traditions, and hospitality that define Italian culture. Guests enjoyed an unforgettable experience featuring exceptional food, lively conversation, and the opportunity to connect with fellow supporters, members, and friends of the Center.

The event drew a wonderful turnout from both the Italian American community and the greater Des Moines community, highlighting the growing excitement and enthusiasm surrounding the Italian American Cultural Center of Iowa. Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the evening such a memorable celebration of food, friendship, and culture.

Bocce Golf at the Biergarten Benefits Food Bank of Iowa

June 24, 2026

On June 24, the Heritage Council of the Italian American Cultural Center of Iowa hosted Bocce Golf at the Biergarten at Water Works Park, bringing together friends, families, and community supporters for an evening of fun and philanthropy. The first group to play were the winners of the Special Olympic Bocce Ball team.

The event featured spirited competition, plenty of laughter, and a shared commitment to giving back, with proceeds and food donations benefiting the Food Bank of Iowa. The turnout from both Center supporters and the broader community was outstanding and served as another reminder of the power of Italian hospitality and generosity.

As Heritage Council member Jon Turner noted, "Bocce golf is a game-hunger isn't." Thank you to everyone who participated, donated, and helped us continue the Italian tradition of gathering around the table and caring for our community.

Check out our social media page for more fun photos from the events!



Bonus Recipe

Here is a recipe taken from the first cook book published by the Italian-American Cultural Center of Iowa circa 1983. We include it in celebration of the Center's 45th birthday (1981 - 2026). It was submitted by **Debbie Fontanini Morlan**.

TITLE

Fritelle

DIRECTIONS

Beat together eggs, cheese, salt, pepper, and eggs. Add flour and baking powder. Beat well. If batter is too thin, add a little flour. Drop by tablespoons into hot fat and fry until brown. Delicious for Sunday breakfast with eggs.

INGREDIENTS

- ☐ 3 cups flour
- ☐ 4 eggs
- ☐ 1/2 cup parmesan cheese
- ☐ 3 tps. Baking Powder
- ☐ salt and pepper to taste

We Reflect And Remember

Daniel Leaming

Clarene Filippelli

To remember a friend or loved one with a memorial, send a check with your tax-deductible donation to:

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

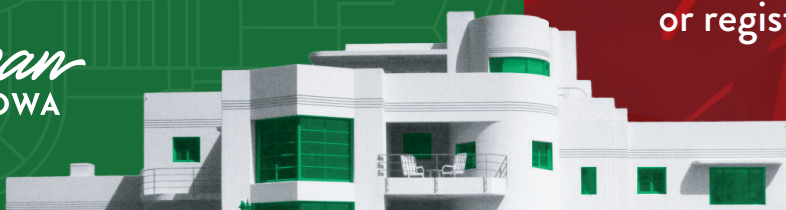
Please include your name and address as well as the name and address of the person you would like to have informed of your gift.



Bella Italia CHILDREN'S DAY CAMP

Language, games, crafts, music, and recipes!

Italian-American
CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA



JULY 27-31

9am to 12pm
Ages 6-12
\$75⁰⁰/camper

Scornovaccos'
Party Room
1930 SE 14th St.

For more information
or to register, contact:
riordan@iaccofia.org
or register on Eventbrite

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)

July/August Newsletter



Monthly Meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of the month and we would love to see you there!

Membership Dues:

If you would like to join IAWI, membership rates are \$25 for members under 65, \$15 for seniors ages 65-74, and free membership for those 75 and better.

If you have any questions or would like a membership form, please contact us, we would love to welcome you to the IAWI family!

- Lucrezia Moore at (515) 710-1247 or visit our website: ItalianAmericanWomenofIowa.com

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 dishes you'd love to learn how to make. These classes are free and are just one of the many benefits of being an IAWI member!*
- As we look ahead, IAWI is also excited to continue giving back to our community. This August, we look forward to donating back-to-school supplies to local school districts and supporting students as they prepare for a successful school year. We're grateful for the opportunity to grow our outreach efforts and give back even more in the months ahead.*

Important Upcoming Dates:

- July 28th- Annual Picnic that will be held at the Southside Senior Center (100 Payton Ave, 50315) beginning at 5:30PM*
- August 25th- IAWI monthly meeting from 6:30PM-7:30PM at the Southside Senior Center (100 Payton Ave, 50315)*

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

- Facebook - lawi IA*
- Instagram - [italianamericanwomenofiowa](https://www.instagram.com/italianamericanwomenofiowa)*



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.

The Men And Women Of The Vittoria Lodge

The annual June dinner for all members was held on June 13th. The evening began with drinks and an antipasto platter from Graziano's followed by a delicious dinner catered from Tumea & Sons. Both of these establishments have earned great respect in our community and they demonstrated this, once again, with their service and cuisine; they did not disappoint.

A memorial service honoring the Vittoria Lodge members who have passed away this past year has become a tradition during this dinner as well. This year we remembered: Larry Biondi, Raymond Chesi, Ned Chiodo, Teonte "Ted" Gentosi, Joe Gioffredi, Richard Gioffredi, and Angelo Stefani. Aldo Lombardi was presented with a lifetime achievement award and AJ Forneris received an award for his dedicated service to the lodge. The evening concluded with music bingo. We were all soon dancing in our chairs and singing along to the familiar songs.

To view photos from this evening, visit our facebook page.

- July 19th starting at noon will be bocce ball/disc golf activities with lunch provided.
- Aug. 16th starting at noon will be bocce ball/disc golf activities with lunch provided.
- Aug. 30th starting at noon is the annual lodge cornfeed and family picnic. Please bring a dish to share, all else will be provided.
- Sept. 20th Lodge meeting at 2:00, followed by polenta dinner-bring a topping.

As Kenny Chesney said, "It's a smile, it's a kiss, it's a sip of wine.....It's summertime!"



Roger Fiori
President, Vittoria Lodge

Deb Fleishman
President, Vittoria Lodge Auxiliary



With Gratitude to Our Grant Sponsors



With Gratitude to Our 2025 Gala Sponsors



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DEFAZIO
My Dad.

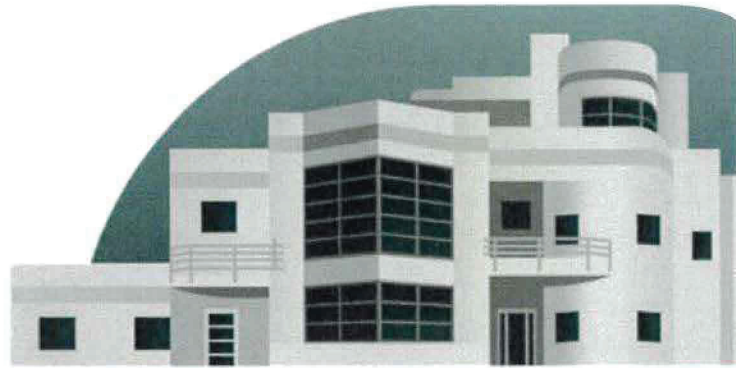
Help our legacy
grow—join our
Family Tree.



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Frank

Antonio Cosentino
DEFAZIO
fu Francesco

Italian-American
CULTURAL CENTER OF IOWA
P.O. BOX 4994
DES MOINES IA 50305



STATEMENT OF GIFT INTENT

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

YES! I/WE WISH TO SUPPORT THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER WITH A PLEDGE:

IN THE AMOUNT OF: _____ OVER: ☐ 1 ☐ 3 ☐ 5 YEARS

PLEASE ACCEPT OUR INITIAL PAYMENT OF: _____

WITH A REMAINING PLEDGE BALANCE OF: _____

PLEASE DESIGNATE MY DONATION AS SUPPORT FOR: _____

NAME TO APPEAR ON DONOR NAMEPLATE: _____

FULFILLMENT OPTIONS:

☐ ENCLOSED IS MY CHECK IN THE AMOUNT OF: _____

☐ PLEASE CHARGE MY/OUR CARD LISTED
BELOW IN THE AMOUNT OF: _____

CARD NUMBER: _____ EXP: _____ CCV: _____

☐ AMERICAN EXPRESS ☐ DISCOVER ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA

☐ I WOULD LIKE TO SET UP A RECURRING PAYMENT FROM MY BANK (AN ITALIAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER REPRESENTATIVE WILL CONTACT YOU REGARDING YOUR ACCOUNT INFORMATION)

☐ I/WE WISH TO GIFT STOCK/SECURITIES: NO. OF SHARES: _____

NAME TICKER: _____

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

☐ I/WE RECOMMEND A GRANT FROM MY/OUR
DONOR ADVISED FUND. FUND NAME: _____

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

DONOR(S) SIGNATURE(S): _____ DATE: _____

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