

## Ferentino students visit Rockford 10 teens find much in common with American peers

By Mike Doyle and Dina Getty



*Among the many sites and places the ten exchange students from Ferentino visited was St. Anthony of Padua Church*

The world became a little smaller when ten high school students from Ferentino, Italy, bonded with teenagers from three Rockford high schools in the continuation of an exchange program organized by the Rockford Italian Sister Cities Alliance (RISCA). The students' visit took place in late October and early November, 2023.

The Italian students from Filetco High School were accompanied by their chaperones, Headmistress Sara Colatosi and Professor Ermelinda Andrelli. Six families hosted students – four from Boylan and one each from Guilford and Keith Country Day. They had the opportunity to visit several local landmarks and took day trips to Chicago and Springfield, in addition to keeping up with their studies by spending time at school with their host peers.

Along the way, they found commonalities and differences. And, not surprisingly, one difference was something they all have in common – school. "Your schools, the buildings are bigger with lots of computers and a library," said Christian DeCarolus. "We study more in Italy, and it seemed to me that the (disciplines) were more interrelated in Italy."

"Here, you have a lot of classes," said Alexia Cirelli. "There are a lot of tests and (more) pressure."

Something else Alexia noticed was the food and how it was prepared. "I'm going to say something bad, but American food is less real," she said. "We have more fresh ingredients. I am proud of my Italian food. The food is one of the best things we have."

Keith Country Day School senior Gianna Epperson's family hosted Sofia Cellitti, and said her new friend was amazed at the mobility of American teenagers. "One thing that was eye-opening to her was that a lot of teenagers here have their own cars," Gianna said.

Gianna said she would always remember is learning Italian words from her new friend. "She was able to teach me some words in Italian. I liked the experience of going back and forth," Gianna said, noting that working together on words led to an awakening of each other's understanding. "We were able to talk about things in Italian that are happening around us."

Coming from an Italian-American family, Gianna said that she has a lot of Italian-American friends. "But it was wonderful to see and hear about her culture, hear her speech and compare things in Italy vs. the U.S." she said. "But also, to see how are cultures are actually quite similar."

Christian's experiences mirrored that feeling. "I liked the interactions I had here," he said. "I liked meeting people."

The students – Giulia Zimbellari, Valentina Borzacca, Beatrice Gargani, Giuseppina Sisti, Sophia Cerroni, Chiara Celani and Silvia Cecilia, in addition to Christian, Alexia and Sofia – had many opportunities to do just that on the trip that was organized by RISCA.

Ferentino students attended school with their hosts several times a week while following a busy itinerary that brought them to St. Ambrogio Club, St. Anthony of Padua Church, Rockford City Hall, Severson Dells, the Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza, Rockford University, Rockford School of Medicine, Burpee, Anderson Gardens, Chicago and Springfield.

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*Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara meets with chaperones from Ferentino, Professor Ermelinda Andrelli and Headmistress Sara Colatosi*

## Dazzling Spello



*A colorful street scene in Spello, Italy, one of the country's prettiest towns. Story, more photos on Page 2.*





## Students ... Continued from Page 1

"The trip to Springfield was especially meaningful," RISCAs President Dina Getty said. "The entire day was planned by State Representative Dave Vella, who has ancestry in Ferentino."

The students were introduced on the State House Floor, met with the Illinois Speaker, toured the Capital and Supreme Court building and were treated by Representative Vella to the Lincoln Museum. They were here over Halloween and were able to experience house parties and the typical traditions of haunted houses and trick or treating.

Alexia truly enjoyed the experience. "I like being in another country," she said. "I have been to Spain, Portugal and France."



*Ferentino exchange students Alexia Cirelli (left) and Christian DeCarolis found much to their liking on their visit to Rockford.*

for two weeks in July to stay with the families of the students they hosted.

The student trip from Ferentino to Rockford is traditionally scheduled through the first week of November so that the students can participate in RISCAs annual fundraiser, Taste of Italy. That event took place on November 5, at the Venetian Club.

This student exchange program, sponsored by RISCAs and supported by the City of Rockford, local businesses and clubs and private donations, continues to be a successful part of the organization's mission. RISCAs in addition to GRIAA has recently added scholarship opportunities for students of Italian descent whose parents or grandparents belong to one of Rockford's Italian clubs.

Students enjoyed their American experience and they learned, despite the language, customs and distance, they are not so very different. "There are so many ways to view things in the world," Gianna said. "We see the world only in the perspective of where we grow up. When you meet people from different countries, it brings such a bigger view of the world."

For more information, visit the website at [ourriscas.org](http://ourriscas.org).

One city was most impressive to Christian – Chicago. "I have never seen anything like this. I felt like I was in a film," he said. "I have been to Rome and Florence, but nothing is like Chicago. It was spectacular."

The chaperones, Sara and Ermelinda, were able to find time to visit each of the host schools, take a boat tour of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and enjoy a dinner at JMK Nippon – something they certainly don't find in Italy. Both the American and Italian students forged friendships during their short stay. Several of Rockford students will be going to Ferentino



*Sofia Cellitti (left) and her hostess Gianna Epperson have a plateful of food to enjoy at RISCAs Taste of Italy, held November 5, at the Venetian Club.*



## Umbrian town of Spello is 'ridiculously pretty'

By Mike Doyle

There are beautiful, picturesque and stunning towns in Italy. And then there is Spello.

Regarded as one of prettiest villages in all of Italy and known as Umbria's flower town, it is located seven miles southeast of Assisi. While some towns, like Assisi, have historical significance or a famous church or palace, Spello is a small town that is an attraction in itself.

Writing on her website, Corrina Cook said, "One of my travelers in October asked me in the parking lot, 'Why are we here?' meaning is there something specific we are to see. My answer was 'because it's beautiful!' "Cook admitted it was hard to understand, "but, as you walk through the first century Roman arch of the city gate, Spello somewhat hits you between the eyes.

Cook describes wandering the medieval streets full of window boxes overflowing with flowers. "It seems like every side street and alleyway is festooned with flowers," she wrote. "Every corner seems to have climbing plants, potted plants, flowering plants or just greenery."

Populated in ancient times by the Umbri, it became a Roman colony in the first century, B.C. and was walled. Under the reign of Constantine the Great, it was called Flavia Constans.

Despite a population of less than 9,000, Spello is known for excellent cuisine and wine as well as frescoes by Pinturicchio (Bernardo di Betto) and Pietro Perugino, 16<sup>th</sup> century Umbrian Renaissance masters.

However, works of a different style are on display in early June when *Le Infiorate*, which means "adorned with flowers," is held on Spello's streets and squares. Up to 70 floral carpets, are created with paint and flowers.



*Scented street art attracts visitors to when Le Infiorate is held in early June. This is one of nearly 70 floral carpets from 2022.*

*Photo credit: infioratespello.it*

Sources: [corrina@corrinaworld.com](mailto:corrina@corrinaworld.com); Fodor's Italy; Rick Steve's Italy; [infioratespello.it](http://infioratespello.it)



*Italian-born Naomi Stillitano waves to the crowd at the 2024 Rose Bowl Parade on January 1*

## Calabrian native crowned 2024 Rose Bowl Parade Queen

Naomi Stillitano didn't know what to make of her first Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, California, nine years ago. The young girl was swaddled in her mother's jacket on a cold January morning in weather nothing like her native Calabria. But she remembered being dazzled by the flowers and the beauty of the Royal Court.

"I was like, 'I want to be a princess,'" Naomi said. Although she didn't become one, she was selected as the 2024 Rose Queen for the 135<sup>th</sup> Rose Bowl. Not only was she the youngest queen in the history of the parade, she was the first of Italian ancestry.

Naomi, a 17-year-old senior at Arcadia, (California) High School, was born in Cosenza, Italy, and lived there until the family moved to the U.S. when she was seven. Clearly proud of her heritage, she is co-president of the school's Italian Culture Club. She enjoys playing guitar and piano, singing, traveling, cooking, drawing, roller skating and bike riding. Naomi speaks fluent Italian, and understands Spanish.

With the goal to create her own fashion brand, Naomi is interested in studying fashion design and marketing at Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, Milano Fashion Institute, Pasadena City College or the University of Southern California. She was visibly emotional when she was crowned the 105<sup>th</sup> Rose Queen in October, describing the day as "such an amazing moment that I will always remember." Her parents were touched by the honor as her mother shed a few tears.

"If you told me nine years ago that I would be the Rose Queen of 2024, I would not have believed you," Naomi said. "My family (parents and two brothers) celebrated after, they were so happy. I'm honestly honored to just be in this position."

*Sources: latimes.com, southpasadenan.com, niaf.org*

## GRIAA Scholarship opportunities

For the past 44 years, the Greater Rockford Italian American Association has provided more than \$800,000 in scholarships, which are presented annually to area Italian American families to defray the cost of a parochial education from K-12. For information, visit [www.griaa.org](http://www.griaa.org), then go to the Scholarship Committee.

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## GRIAA seeks Hall of Fame, Special Recognition nominations

The Greater Rockford Italian American Association is seeking men and women who have shown a tremendous amount of dedication and leadership for consideration for the Greater Rockford Italian American Hall of Fame and Special Recognition. Inductees are nominated by community members and selected by GRIAA's Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Committee. Nominees should be persons of Italian heritage who, through their exemplary lives, have made significant contributions to the community in and through the arts, sciences, government, business, industry, athletics, and volunteer, civic and philanthropic activities or any other appropriate category. Such contributions should reflect a notable community impact and the highest standards and ideals. The primary difference between Hall of Fame and Special Recognition consideration is described below:

**Hall of Fame** criteria – The nominee should have made a significant overall impact to the Italian-American community.

**Special Recognition** criteria – The nominee's overall significant impact is to the community at large.

Nomination forms are available at the GRIAA website, [www.griaa.org](http://www.griaa.org). Nominations are due July 15. It is not necessary to indicate on the nomination form which category for which you are nominating the group or individual. The committee will make that determination on the information provided.

Joining the impressive list of honorees in 2023 were: Hall of Fame – Father James Ciaramitaro and Frank Valentine; and Special Recognition – Bove's Auto and Truck Service for business and Dan Appino for athletics.





## Seeking dual Italian citizenship worth the time

By Frank Perrecone

My journey for dual Italian citizenship continues. I started the process in July 2021. Since my last article for the Fall 2023 *Pappagallo*, I'm still waiting for my grandfather's certified Certificate of Naturalization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. I should receive that document in time for my in-person Chicago consulate appointment in July.

From time to time, I have been asked why I am seeking dual Italian citizenship. Fair question. I am sure others have been asked the same question. Before I address the question, let's review the main benefits of dual Italian citizenship derived from my survey of internet websites. The below list is not exhaustive:

### **Unrestricted travel throughout Italy and most countries.**

Do you remember the last time you flew to Italy and the long slow lines of people waiting to have their passports checked and stamped? Maybe you had a connecting flight to catch, and time was of the essence. Do you also remember the much shorter and quicker lines for those holding passports of certain European countries? Since Italy is a member of the European Union (EU) and member nation of the Schengen Agreement, Italian citizens with passports can enter Italy and many other EU nations via the shorter and quicker airport lines.

### **Automatic Italian citizenship to children under 18 years of age and their future descendants.**

Children under the age of 18 are automatic Italian citizens by virtue of their dual citizenship parent. There is no bureaucratic red tape like applying for dual citizenship. The simplified process includes registering the child's birth with Italian authorities.

### **Italian healthcare benefits.**

For those residing in Italy, Italian healthcare is guaranteed. Italian-run healthcare is high quality and low cost. Registration with the National Health Service and with the local health care authorities is required. A primary care physician can be chosen from a list of physicians in the locality.

### **Automatic European Union citizenship.**

An Italian citizen becomes a citizen of the EU which gives the right to move freely throughout most of Europe. And Italian citizens with national healthcare cards are covered for emergency medical care by most EU nations' national healthcare systems at low or no cost.

### **No Italian income tax unless you reside in Italy**

Generally, Italian income taxes are not accessed unless the dual citizen resides in Italy for more than half of the year. No doubt different tax rules apply if you work or have investment income in Italy.

### **Right to vote in certain Italian elections.**

Italian citizens living abroad have the right to vote in national elections and for representatives who reside outside of Italy. For years, the late Senatore Renato Turano, a Chicago-area businessman of Turano Baking Company distinction, was the elective representative for Italian citizens living in North and Central America.

### **Reconnecting with Italian Heritage.**

There are non-tangible benefits of dual Italian citizenship, such



*Dual Italian citizenship would allow travelers to more easily navigate Rome's Fiumicino Airport.*

Source: rome hacks.com

as reconnecting with your Italian heritage. Most of our ancestors left Italy over 100 years ago. While many Italian-Americans in the U.S. still maintain Italian customs and traditions of the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Italian people have changed with the times. But Italian-Americans have remained static of their understanding of Italian heritage and culture.

Returning to the question of why am I seeking dual citizenship, the answer is to reconnect with my Italian heritage. When most immigrants left Italy and settled in the U.S., they wanted their families to assimilate into the fabric of their new country, by speaking English and becoming accepted. Although well intentioned and necessary, that created a "heritage void" for the second, third and fourth generations. Generations of Italian-Americans do not have a strong connection to their heritage.

Can I reconnect with my heritage without becoming an Italian citizen? Yes, but I would not have that sense of pride in acquiring the citizenship of my grandparents. Is it worth the time, frustration and expense of seeking dual citizenship? I believe it is.

## Centuripe: starfish in the mountains

Centuripe, a small city in the province of Enna, is known for two reasons – it is one of Italy's star cities and is called as the "balcony of Sicily" because of its views of nearby Mt. Etna. The unique human-like shape of the town is a result of its topography. From the city center, Centuripe branches out in five different directions in the shape of a starfish.





## Little Italy Tasting Tour a big treat NYC attraction features pizza, cannoli, history

By Mike Doyle

Finding Little Italy on map of New York City is a lot like getting a slice of prosciutto at a deli. The Lower Manhattan neighborhood is very thin, sandwiched between SoHo, Chinatown and Nolita (which is a mash-up for North of Little Italy). The densest concentration of truly Italian restaurants, shops and stores is found on a three-block stretch of Mulberry Street.

But you can get a real sense of what immigrants from Italy and Sicily found when they arrived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by taking a Little Italy Tasting Tour. We did that on a Sunday in early October, 2023, and walked a circle-like route on and around Mulberry Street, stopping at bakeries, cheese and pasta shops and a famous pizzeria. Along the way, our guide Vincent, in his animated style and Brooklyn accent, told stories to our group of 11 about the people, places and history of one of New York's most iconic neighborhoods.

Our group met at La Bella Ferrara Bakery on Mulberry Street. The first stop was to taste delicious sponge cake at the decidedly non-Italian Kam Hing Bakery, which is across Baxter Street from the Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood. During the Feast of San Gennaro, a statue of San Gennaro is taken from the church, a block west of Mulberry, and carried in a procession through the

Streets of Little Italy. The September celebration generates funds that supports the ethnic neighborhood.

The saint lends his name to Ristorante Da Gennaro restaurant at 129 Mulberry which is famous for an unsaintly person. The restaurant was the site of Umberto's Clam House, where mobster Joey Gallo was gunned down. Staying safely across the street, our group then walked to the Cannoli King bakery, where names of famous customers -- from Connie Francis and Dennis Farina to Quincy Jones and Madeleine



*While this store's name may be familiar to Rockford's Italian-Americans, it's actually Piemonte's Ravioli Company, one of the stops on the Little Italy Food Tour in New York City. Tour guide Vincent points out the pasta.*

Albright -- are painted on a large mirror. We clearly were in good company because the cannoli was great.

Next was a pasta maker with an historic Rockford-themed name. At Piemonte Ravioli Co., we didn't sample the ravioli but had some wonderful *gnocchi di patate*. A block east of Mulberry on Mott Street is Lombardi's Pizza, the first pizzeria in the U.S., which still uses a coal oven. This we also saw at a distance.

We walked two blocks east and then north to Elizabeth Street where Vincent showed us the boyhood home of Oscar-winning director Martin Scorsese. Across the street is Albanese Meats and Poultry, used in "Godfather III" and was the store where the "Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" got the beef brisket at the start of her show.

Two blocks away is the original St. Patrick's Cathedral, where Scorsese was an altar boy. (Vincent told us that, at the time, Scorsese was seriously considering the priesthood.) We wound our way back to Mulberry street to Nolita Pizza to eat some of the best New York pizza and rest our feet. Then we sampled another cannoli at Ferrara's, which was also very good.

We finished our tour weary and full outside the Mulberry

Street Bar and Restaurant, which looked a little familiar. That's because scenes from "The Sopranos," "Donny Brasco," "The Pope of Greenwich Village," and, of course, "The Godfather III," were filmed there. Among its patrons were Frank Sinatra and Al Pacino.

The Little Italy Tasting Tour and its four-course lunch of prosciutto, pizza, pasta and cannoli left us so satisfied that we canceled our dinner reservations.



*Mulberry Street, the heart of Little Italy, is teeming with life on a busy Sunday afternoon. That's the Empire State Building at center left.*





## Angela Ruggiero: Winning on and off the ice

By Paul Anthony Arco

When you think of some of the greats in hockey history, Wayne Gretzky, Bobby Orr and Sidney Crosby come to mind.

And then there's Angela Ruggiero, who had a remarkable career of her own.



*Hockey Hall of Famer Angela Ruggiero in action*

*Source: detroitnews.com*

Ruggiero was a four-time Olympic medalist who enjoyed a 15-year career with the U.S. Women's National Team. In fact, she has played more games (256) for Team USA than any other hockey player in the country's history, before retiring from the women's team in 2011.

In 1998, Ruggiero helped the U.S. women's team earn its first-ever gold medal in the Olympic Winter Games. Ruggiero was the youngest member of the team. The U.S. went on to earn silver medals in 2002 and 2010, and a bronze in 2006. Ruggiero was named the top defenseman in the winter games in 2002 and 2006.

In 2015, Ruggiero became only the fourth woman, and second American, to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Not bad for a young woman from California, who was cut from her youth team, even though she was one of the best players on the ice.

Editor's note: Once again in celebration of March as Women's History Month, Page 6 of the *Pappagallo* features an American woman of Italian heritage who has had historically significant and noteworthy accomplishments. In addition, another story about an outstanding Italian woman appears on Page 7.

"My dad told me, 'You can quit and prove them right, or you can get on the horse and prove them wrong,'" Ruggiero has said in interviews. "I chose the latter, and it was the best moment of my life."

Ruggiero played college hockey at Harvard University, where she was a four-time NCAA All-American as well as an academic All-American. Ruggiero helped lead Harvard to a national title in 1999 and, five years later, was named recipient of the Patty Kazmaier Memorial Trophy as the top women's hockey player in college hockey.

A year later, in 2005, Ruggiero made history when she and her brother, Bill, became the first brother-sister duo to play together in a professional hockey game when they suited up for the Tulsa Oilers of the Central Hockey League. In that game, Ruggiero also became the first woman non-goalie to play in a men's professional hockey game in the U.S.



*Angela Ruggiero*

*Source: forbes.com*

Ruggiero spent most of her professional career playing in different women's hockey leagues. She won a league championship with the Minnesota Whitecaps in 2009. She also played for the Montreal Axion in the National Women's Hockey League and later for the Boston Blades of the Canadian Women's Hockey League.

She's also excelled off the ice. Ruggiero served on the board of the International Olympic Committee for eight years and was the chief strategy officer for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic bid. She earned a B.A. from Harvard, an M.Ed. from the University of Minnesota, and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. She has been recognized by the National Italian American Federation for her wide range of success in athletics and other professional endeavors. She also is a member of the National Italian Sports Hall of Fame in Chicago.

These days, Ruggiero stays busy as CEO of Sports Innovation Lab, a company she co-founded in 2016. Sports Innovation Lab collects and analyzes data from sports, technology and media industries to help leagues, teams and brands better understand their fans.

"I started Sports Innovation Lab because I understand the power sport has to change the world," Ruggiero has said in the past. "We need to rethink the way we think about sports, athletes and most importantly, the fans. Fans are the lifeblood of the industry."



# Giorgia Meloni: Convictions and contradictions

## Populist recognized societal concerns to become Italy's first woman prime minister

By Rosaria Mercuri-Ford

Many political observers were taken by surprise when, on January 2, 2020, the prestigious British newspaper *"The Times"* mentioned Giorgia Meloni among twenty rising stars worth following. The paper believed those people would strongly influence the socio-political world scene by the end of that same year. Of course, everyone knew who Giorgia Meloni was: an Italian right-wing, conservative politician belonging to the populist party *Fratelli D'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) that she had co-founded in 2014. But few people believed that her party, *Fdl* for short, would grow exponentially and that she would be elected prime minister in only two years.

On September 25, 2022, the right-wing parties coalition, formed by Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (FI), Matteo Salvini's *Lega* (League) and Meloni's *Fdl* soundly defeated the center-left parties, including the democratic party *PD*, thus winning the election in which Meloni and her party received the highest percentage of votes. Giorgia Meloni was sworn in as prime minister on October 22, 2022, at the age of 45, the first female politician to ever hold the prestigious position.

Some of the reasons for the overwhelming victory of Giorgia Meloni's party include the ever-growing disaffection of the Italian people with the unstable political system; the inability of left and center parties to unite on a common ground; everyday practical concerns, like the constantly rising cost of living; and the endemic lack of jobs for young people.

The populist approach of the candidate Meloni successfully voiced the frustration and anger of many Italians by promising audacious solutions, including a naval blockade to keep migrants off the Italian shores; strong government intervention to drastically reduce the cost of gasoline; and a significant cut in subsidies to the unemployed, in order to reduce government expenses.

As of now, those promises have not had much success and Prime Minister Meloni has been reversing on much of her election promises. Her combative demeanor and extreme tones have softened, and she is striving to pursue a less aggressive agenda. Nevertheless, international observers and political experts are still baffled by her unchanged popularity and the favorable standing of her party, *Fratelli D'Italia*, whose political claims have, especially in the past, been rather extreme.

Meloni's party has often been referred to as a nationalist, nativist, anti-immigrant, anti-Islamist, even Neo-Fascist party. Members of her party have displayed anti-European Union (EU) ideals, homophobic sentiments and passionate opposition to the many asylum-seekers landing on Italy's shores. Meloni herself often echoed the far-right stances of French politician, Marine Le Pen, and shared nationalistic views of former White House strategist Steve Bannon, who attended her party congress in 2018.

The symbol of her party still displays the tricolor flame, very reminiscent of the old neo-fascist party *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, (Social Movement of Italy) *MSI* for short, that was established by nostalgic supporters of Benito Mussolini, and operated from 1945 to 1995. Meloni joined the *MSI* in 1992 at the age of 15. Four years later, still a teen, she publicly lauded Mussolini and often praised Giorgio Almirante, the founder and longtime leader of the *MSI* party.



Italian Prime Minister  
Giorgia Meloni

As the new government leader, Meloni has denied harboring far-right positions and openly condemned the racial laws and lack of democracy during Italian Fascism. She recently declared that Fascism belongs to the past but, in a 2022 speech in Rome, she invoked the old Fascist slogan: "God, Family and Fatherland," which still appears on her party's event banners. As prime minister, Meloni has warmed up to the policies of the EU and has been

actively collaborating with other EU members; has put aside the old desire to improve relationships with Russia; has shown support for NATO and pledged arms and humanitarian help to Ukraine; and lately defended Israel's right to defend its people from Hamas' attacks.

After recurrent floods, droughts and fires on Italian soil, Meloni acknowledged the catastrophic effects of climate change and the need for urgent, mitigating interventions. On July 27, 2023, she visited the U.S., where she addressed Congress and met with President Joe Biden, as a sign of continuous friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Meloni, who in a 2016 speech introduced herself as "a woman, a mother and a Christian," strongly supports a traditional family, headed by a mother and a father and openly opposes same-sex marriage and LGBT stances. She is an unwed mother who recently separated from her long-time partner, journalist Andrea Giambruno.

The opposition's criticism of Meloni's first year of government is that it favors the super-rich and the banks, while cutting funds for social services and raising taxes on the middle class. Meloni has often been criticized for avoiding journalists' questions and avoiding press conferences altogether. On January 4, 2024, the premier did give an end-of-year address, which she had to cancel twice due to illness. She defended her first year of government and political agenda with conviction, using very concise, accurate statements and welcoming questions from the attendees.



# The legendary Billy Celebron

## 'The uncrowned middleweight champion of the world'

### owned iconic bar on South Main Street

By Mike Doyle

Like the fictional bar "Cheers" in Boston and the very real Billy Goat Tavern under Michigan Avenue in Chicago, urban watering holes are iconic. While it is long gone, downtown Rockford had one of those, too – a place you could get a cold beer, an earful of history and even a photo of a professional boxing champ.

That place was Billy Celebron's Loop Tap, located at 321 South Main Street, a few doors down from the former Hanley Furniture and Redwood Restaurant. For years, Billy's was a gathering place for night-owls and late-shift workers looking for a place to quench their thirsts.

That was Billy behind the bar, hair slicked back, wearing a white shirt, telling stories and handing out photos of himself as a young boxer. A welterweight (140-147 pounds), Billy fought professionally from 1933-39 and finished with a highly respectable record of 51-11-1. The back bar featured a large photo of Billy as well as other memorabilia, including a list of his bouts.

Retired barber John Massetti, who used to cut Billy's hair at his shop around the corner on Chestnut Street, recalled Billy handing out photos. "Billy had a stack of those photos of himself," said Massetti. "And he would give them to customers."

When he died in 1987 at the age of 77, the *Rockford Register Star* wrote, "Billy's legend continued to grow as he recalled the fight game to all who remembered and would listen to his story of greats and near-greats and how he was 'that close' to being a big winner." And it really was close.

After winning his first match with a first-round knock-out, Billy went on to win his next 18. An up-and-coming welterweight, he was refused a shot at the title, so he moved up in class to the middleweight division. That led to two 10-round bouts with Tony Zale, a rising middleweight, about a month apart. Both were held at Marigold Gardens, an outdoor arena then located a few blocks northeast of Wrigley Field in Chicago. Zale, 87-18-2 lifetime, was 28-12-1 when he met Billy on July 18, 1938. It was a hard-fought, close match. It seemed to be over when Billy floored Zale in the second round, but Zale rebounded. In a controversial decision, the judges split, scoring 51-49 for Billy, 51-49 for Zale and a 50-50 draw.

Five weeks later, on August 22, 1938, Billy beat Zale in a referee's decision. Billy had only five more fights. Zale, meanwhile, had 41 more matches. Born Anthony Zaleski in South Bend,



*Possibly taken at a local boxing ring, Billy Celebron handed out this photo*

Indiana, he won the NBA welterweight title against Al Hostak, in 1940 and defended it three times – once against Hostak. After serving in World War II, he returned to the ring in 1947 and took the middleweight title in a memorable match against Rocky Graziano. Zale lost a rematch with Graziano in July 1948 at Chicago Stadium but won it back in June 1949 with a knockout.

And here is where Billy's best story would get good.

In two bouts against a future world champion, Billy never lost. Some in the boxing world felt that Billy was robbed of a title himself in that first bout because he sent Zale to the mat.

A New York City newspaper ran a cartoon in the sports section depicting Billy wearing a kingly crown. "A newspaper claimed he won the fight and got screwed," Massetti said. "So, the paper put out a cartoon of him, wearing trunks with a crown on his head – 'The Uncrowned Middleweight Champion of the World.' Somebody made a stack of those, and he used to give them out. I've got one. It says, 'To my pal, John.' "

After his last bout in 1939 and knowing he would never get another chance at a professional title, he returned to the Rockford area. The 1940 U.S. Census lists him as a tavern owner, possibly the Town Hall Tavern in Loves Park. Sometime afterward and well in his 30s, he enlisted in the U.S. Marines during World War II. Billy told this story to Massetti from his days in the service: "He was on a troop ship going across the ocean. They found out he was a boxer, so they set up this fight against a young sailor. Of course, Billy won the fight," Massetti said.

Billy, who was managed for a time by another iconic boxer from Rockford, Sammy Mandell, returned to Rockford after the war and ran the 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue Tap before taking over the Loop Tap on South Main. He kept his hand in the game by working with young boxers in a boxing club above a grocery store further down on South Main.

Massetti had a first-hand experience with Billy the boxer, even a much older Billy.

"I was cutting his hair and I was kidding around with him, and he said, 'Hit me! Hit me in the face!' " Massetti said. "I said, 'I'm not going to.' But he finally talked me into it. I threw a left hook at him and he had the punch blocked and his fist in my face in a half-second! He was probably 65 years old."



*Billy Celebron, "the sharp-shooting youngster," jabs with his right hand in a bout.*

*Continued on Page 9*





## Billy ... Continued from Page 8



*Billy Celebron's Loop Tavern knife for sale on E-Bay*

While Billy looked back fondly on his boxing days, it turned out that owning the tavern was a good thing. In his obituary, the *Register Star* wrote that Billy "made more money selling beer than he had made all the time he was fighting."

Billy was born to Antonio and Corona Celebron on September 10, 1910, in Carre, Italy, in the province of Vinanza, about 50 miles northwest of Venice. He spent most of his life in Rockford, which is likely where he started to box as an amateur and got his first taste of success. In 1933 in his early 20s, he won two amateur titles – the national AAU Championship and the Golden Gloves. His first professional bout was on November 6 of the same year when he knocked out Russell Beals in Sioux City, Iowa. In 1936, after beating Cleto Locatelli in New York City on a TKO, the *New York Times* called him a "sharp-shooting youngster from Rockford, Ill." He died December 11, 1987, after a long illness. He was survived by two brothers, a step-son and numerous nieces and nephews.

Those who remember the Loop Tap will recall the distinctive neon sign that hung outside, depicting a boxer taking a swing.

His memory does live on in a very modern way as well. An internet search of him turns up a piece of memorabilia on E-Bay as a rare boxing champion souvenir. It is a small pocket knife that he would give to customers. It reads: "Billy Celebron Loop Tavern Rockford Ill." You can buy it for \$99.99.

The *Register Star* story ended this way: "Although sick and almost blind, his tavern closed, aging and alone, the folklore of Billy Celebron will go on even though his fight is over."

## Amici Italiani troupes begin rehearsals

The Greater Rockford Italian American Association's ambassadors of dance, the *Amici Italiani* Dance Troupes, are beginning to hold practices for their upcoming performances at the *Festa Italiana* and other venues. GRIAA sponsors two troupes – the youth troupe for those 13-years-old and younger and the adult troupe for those 14-and-older.

Both troupes have openings for new dancers, including those with no experience. If interested, call Bea Giammarese Ricotta at 815-520-1010 for the adult troupe and Pauline Urso at 815-218-0063 for the youth troupe.

## Ethnic Heritage Museum To celebrate Pinocchio

A celebration of the memorable and beloved Italian fairy tale character Pinocchio will be held at the Ethnic Heritage Museum, Sunday, February 25.

At the event, "Pinocchio: More Than Just a Movie," those attending will learn about the original story, which is unlike the Disney version, and its author Carlo Collodi. The museum will be open from 2-4 p.m., with the presentation scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m.

The museum will celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a fund-raiser Thursday, April 11, at the Embassy Suites Riverfront and will feature performances of traditional dances, music and will showcase the beauty and richness of movement as an expression of cultural identity.

The museum was founded in 1989 to celebrate the cultures of the six historically ethnic groups that called the neighborhoods of South Rockford home – African-American, Hispanic, Irish, Italian, Lithuanian and Polish.

The event will be held from 6-8:30 p.m. and includes dinner, silent auction and entertainment. Ticket are \$80 for museum members, \$95 for non-members. For information, contact the museum office at 815-962-7402 or by email at [ehm1129@comcast.net](mailto:ehm1129@comcast.net) or [www.ethnicheritagemuseum.org](http://www.ethnicheritagemuseum.org). The museum is located at 1129 South Main Street.

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A wood cut of Genoa in the 15th century.

Source: alamy.com

## Cheap, coarse, strong; blues jeans born in Italy

A popular synonym of blue jeans is Levi's. The popular denim we wear in pants, shirts, jackets, and, well, you name it, is associated with Levi Strauss and Jacob Davies, who "discovered" jeans in 1873 in California and made them popular because of their durability. You can give them credit for adapting them to work clothes when they mass produced pants with pockets on the front and back, securing them with copper rivets.

But did you know that blue jeans actually originated in Genoa, Italy? This fact was presented in the "Riveted: The History of Jeans," an entry in PBS' American Experience series that originally aired in 2022 but was re-broadcast in 2023.

There is even more history about the fabric, whose popularity is world-wide. The word "denim" comes from the name of a sturdy fabric called "serge de Nimes," which was initially made in Nimes, France. From "de Nimes," the word denim was created.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, shipbuilders and merchants in Genoa, one of the Mediterranean's most historically important ports, needed cheap, coarse and strong cotton fabric to make sails and protect their goods. Through trial and error, the weavers of Nimes created a cotton twill textile, with threads dyed in indigo and white that combined for a blue denim color. The result was a fabric. And the word "jeans" was adapted from the word, Genoa.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, jean cloth was an important textile for lower class, or working-class, people in northern Italy. Some popular 17<sup>th</sup> century paintings depict nobility wearing the fabric. In fact, an unknown artist was nicknamed "The Master of the Blue Jeans." Most people wore a cheaper version called Genoese Jean.

The fabric may also have roots in the early 1600s when a coarse, thick cotton cloth was made in Dongri, a village near Mumbai (formerly Bombay), India. That gave us the word "dungarees," a synonym for jeans. Worn by impoverished people,

it was colored blue but sometimes white. Called "dingri" in Hindi, it was exported by English merchants, who dubbed it "dungaree."

In the mid-1800s, some anonymous but perceptive merchant had the brilliant idea of sending a shipment of blue work pants to the United States. These "blue jeans," originally including trousers, overalls and coats, were designed with lots of strong pockets as requested by gold miners. Jacob W. Davis made them even stronger by adding copper pocket rivets in 1871. On May 20, 1873, Davis and Levi Strauss got a patent for the process, which can be seen on the blue jeans we wear today.

Source: wikipedia.com

## 2024 Spring, Summer Festivals in Italy

### April (*Aprile*)

14-17 – *Vinitalia*, Wine Festival, Verona

### May (*Maggio*)

18 – *Sagra del Limone*, Lemon Festival, Monterosso, Cinque Terre

25 – *Festa della Madonna delle Milizie*, The Festival of the Madonna on Horseback, Scicli, Sicily, processions and re-enactments of battles vs. the Normans and Saracens

### June (*Giugno*)

1-2 – *Le Infiores di Spello*, Adorned with Flowers Festival, Spello, Umbria

### July (*Luglio*)

12 – September 6 – Stresa Classical Music Festival, Lake Maggiore

### August (*Agosto*)

15 – *Ferragosto*, Festival of Emperor Augustus, national holiday

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### St. Joseph's Pasta (*Pasta con Sarde*)

- 1 12-ounce can tomato paste
- 1 large (28- to 32-ounces) can tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Basil, several fresh sprigs or 1 teaspoon dried
- 1-2 tomato paste cans cold water
- 1 pound fried smelts, cut up or 1 two-ounce can anchovies, chopped
- 1 large onion, minced
- 2-3 gloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 large can *Condimento per Pasta con Sarde* (seasoning for macaroni with sardines)
- 1 cup fennel or anise to taste, chopped

Place chopped fennel or anise in small saucepan with water to cover and cook until tender; set aside. In a heavy, large saucepan, place oil, garlic and onion and cook until golden. Add tomato paste, water, tomatoes with the juice, fried or chopped fish. Stir and mix well. Add salt and pepper to taste, cooked fennel or anise, basil and can of condiment. Let simmer 1-2 hours until done to taste and desired thickness, stirring often. Cook 1-2 pounds thin spaghetti, according to directions. Drain and top with sauce and toasted bread crumbs. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

### Toasted Bread Crumbs (*Modica*)

- 2-3 cups bread crumbs
- 1-2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Enough oil to moisten crumbs

Place all ingredients in a skillet over low flame. Stir and mix with spatula until toasted to a golden brown. Remove from flame and place in service bowl immediately. Leftovers can be refrigerated.

Or use this recipe: In a saucepan, heat oil and add breadcrumbs, cooking on low until the crumbs are lightly browned. Stir constantly to prevent burning. Remove from heat and add sugar. Use as topping over *Pasta con Sardi*.

Source both from: *St. Anthony of Padua Altar and Rosary Society Cookbook*

### Pasta Carbonara

*This quick and easy recipe came from Sofia Celletti, an exchange student from Ferentino, Italy, who stayed with the Epperson Family last fall.*

- ½ ounce pancetta cut into small pieces (can use bacon, Canadian bacon or turkey)

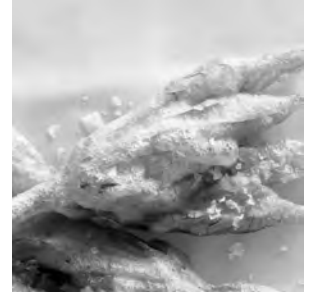
- 1 egg per person
- Spaghetti or Linguine (2 ounces per person)
- ½ pounds Parmesan cheese, shaved
- Fresh ground pepper

Cook spaghetti. Place cut pancetta into bowl, add an egg and cheese and mix well. Drain cooked pasta into the bowl and quickly add egg mixture to prevent egg from lumping. The hot pasta will cook the egg in the bowl. Add fresh ground pepper.

### Fried Zucchini Blossoms

- Vegetable oil (for frying)
- 1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 12 ounces chilled Pilsner, lager-style beer, or club soda
- Zucchini blossoms (stamens removed; about 2 dozen)
- Sea salt

In a large pot, heat about 2 inches of oil over medium heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Combine flour and salt in a medium bowl, then whisk in beer until almost smooth (some small lumps are welcome—don't over whisk or you'll deflate the batter). One by one, dredge the blossoms in batter, shaking off the excess; gently lay them in the oil, without crowding the pan. Cook, flipping once with a slotted spoon, until golden brown, 2-3 minutes total. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Sprinkle with sea salt and devour while hot.



Source: *bonappetit.com*

### Chicken *Scaloppini* in Lemon Caper Sauce

- 2 large chicken breasts, butterflied
- 1 cup flour
- 3-4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons butter
- Salt
- Large bunch fresh leaf spinach
- 2-3 cloves garlic, sliced
- Lemon slices (if desired)
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup chicken broth
- ¼ cup white wine
- ¼ cup capers, rinsed
- Small bunch parsley, chopped

Cut the chicken breasts into at least two pieces and pound the pieces flatly. In a saucepan, slowly heat 2-3 tablespoons of oil and 2 tablespoons of butter. Place flour in pan and dredge the salted breasts on each side. Place floured chicken in saucepan and cook on stovetop over low heat (do not cook thoroughly) until it has a light golden color. Remove chicken and set aside. In the same pan, cook the garlic to just golden. Add spinach and sprinkle of salt, and toss, then cover. Once wilted, remove from pan and set aside, keeping spinach warm. Add 2 tablespoons of butter and 1 tablespoon of oil into pan with lemon slice (if desired). Add lemon juice, chicken broth, wine and capers and cook slowly for 1-2 minutes. Add salt as desired. Add chicken breasts and cook until done, adding parsley just before they are finished. Place chicken over spinach and add sauce from pan.

Source: *Cipolla-Doyle family*





### Italian Pot Roast

5 pounds pot roast  
 ½ teaspoons salt  
 ½ teaspoon black pepper  
 ¼ cup olive oil or vegetable oil  
 2 stalks celery, finely chopped  
 2 carrots, quartered to 1/2-inch pieces  
 2 large onions, chopped  
 2 cans tomato sauce (8 ounces each)  
 2 cups water  
 2 cloves garlic, crushed  
 Several fresh basil leaves or 1 1-2 teaspoons dried basil  
 2 teaspoons oregano  
 1 ½ teaspoon salt  
 2 tablespoons corn starch  
 2 tablespoons cold water

Season meat with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium heat and brown meat on all sides. Remove from pan and set aside. Sauté celery, carrots and onions in remaining oil in pan until golden. Return meat to Dutch oven and add tomato sauce, 2 cups water, garlic, herbs, 1-1/2 teaspoons salt and ¼ teaspoons pepper and cover. Bring to a boil, then simmer or bake at 350 degrees for 3-3-1/2 hours, turning occasionally, until meat is tender. Remove to a serving platter.

*Source: Albert Skaronea's A Gourmet Trip thru Italy*

### Carm's Stuffed Italian Green Peppers

2 pounds ground beef or turkey  
 1 cup rice, cooked  
 2-3 eggs beaten  
 Parsley, chopped (to taste)  
 ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese  
 1 or 2 large garlic cloves, minced  
 5-6 green peppers, cored and seeds removed  
 3-4 slices bacon

Brown bacon in Dutch oven on stove and set aside. In a bowl, mix meat, rice, parsley, cheese and garlic, then add eggs one at a time until mixture is moist and soft. Stuff into peppers but do not pack tightly. Add stuffed peppers one or two at a time to bacon grease



and brown on all sides, remove and continue browning. When all are browned, place in Dutch oven, add a little water, turn to simmer, and steam for one hour. Add water if necessary.

*Source: Carm Cipolla*

### Pepper and Egg Sandwich

4 green peppers, washed, seeded and sliced (red peppers can be used)  
 4 large eggs  
 1 medium onion,  
 2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced  
 ¼ cup olive oil  
 Grated Parmesan or Romano cheese  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Crusty bread of your choice, sliced, Italian or French  
 Mild or hot Giardiniera (optional)

Heat olive oil in saucepan and add green peppers, stirring often to your taste – *al dente* or softened. Remove peppers and add onions to pan, sautéing until opaque, then add garlic, cooking until softened. Return peppers to pan and mix well with onions and garlic. In a bowl, season eggs with salt, pepper and cheese and whisk well. Pour eggs on the peppers and cook until set. Place on slices of crusty bread. Add Giardiniera.

*Source: Cipolla-Doyle family*

### Italian Lemon Knot Cookies

#### *Tarallucci al Limone*

3 ½ cups all-purpose flour  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 Pinch of salt  
 3 large eggs  
 ¾ cup granulated sugar  
 ½ cup canola, vegetable or sunflower oil  
 ¼ cup cream  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 2 ½ tablespoons lemon zest  
 2 tablespoons lemon juice



### Lemon Glaze

2 ½ cups powdered sugar  
 4 tablespoons lemon juice

Preheat oven to 350. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt, and set aside. In a mixer, beat the eggs and sugar for 1 minute. Add oil, cream, vanilla, lemon zest, lemon juice and mix until combined. Add the flour mixture and beat for 1 minute until dough is thoroughly combined. Dough will be soft and tacky but still easy to work. Transfer dough to a work surface. Cut off pieces of dough, slightly smaller than a golf ball, and roll into a log about ½ inch wide and 7 inches long. Lightly dust hands and roll dough. Twist the dough, forming a loop and insert one end through the loop, forming a knot. Place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Place cookies about 2 inches apart. Bake 15-18 minutes. When done, cookies should be pale with lightly browned edges. Cool on a wire rack.

To make the glaze, whisk the sugar and lemon juice, then dip cookies one at a time in the glaze, letting the glaze drop off. Place cookies on a rack until glaze is completely set.

*Source: marisasitaliankitchen.com*

*buon appetito!*



*St. Anthony of Padua's St Joseph Altar on display in 2023.*

## Four churches will host St. Joseph Altars

St. Joseph's Day will be celebrated at four area Catholic churches on Saturday and Sunday, March 16 and 17 – St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bernadette and Holy Family in Rockford and St. Bridget in Loves Park. Because it is believed that St. Joseph saved Sicily from a famine in the Middle Ages, altars laden with bread, cakes, fruit and other delicacies are created in reverence of his benevolence.

At each church, and home altars as well, dozens of volunteers take on tasks of organizing, constructing, baking and cooking for an altar to the patron saint of carpenters, fathers and the family. All of the altars are open to the public without charge. Three of the church altars will offer the traditional *Pasta con Sarde* (St. Joseph Pasta). Holy Family is creating an altar for the first time and will offer sweets and baked goods but not pasta.

Here are the locations and times:

- St. Anthony of Padua, 1010 Ferguson Street. The altar will be blessed after the 4:30 p.m. Mass, Saturday, March 16; open to the public, noon-3 p.m. March 17, for traditional meal.
- St. Bernadette, 2400 Bell Avenue. Altar viewing will take place Saturday, March 16, from 5:30-7 p.m.; open to the public, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m., March 17, for traditional meal (carry-outs available).
- Holy Family, 4401 Highcrest Road. Blessing before 4:30 Mass on Saturday, March 16. The altar can be viewed after all Masses on Saturday night and Sunday, March 16-17. Call the church at 815-398-4280 for more information.
- St. Bridget, 604 Clifford Avenue, 4-6 p.m., Saturday, March 16; 7 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and March 17 for traditional meal both days (carry-out only).

*See Page 12 for Pasta con Sarde recipe*

## Midway Village Museum turns 50; Collection includes Italian history

By Laura Furman

Midway Village Museum is pleased to announce that 2024 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the museum's opening in 1974.

Midway Village Museum was founded by the Rockford, Harlem, and Swedish Historical Societies with a mission to collect, preserve and interpret the history of the Rockford area. Led by passionate volunteers, the museum began collecting artifacts and documents in the early 1970s.

The Museum Center's History Gallery opened in 1974 with its first exhibits, and additions followed in 1976, 1986, and 1988. In 2010 an addition was added for the *Many Faces, One Community* exhibit spotlighting the immigration stories of Rockfordians from many countries.

Featured in that exhibit are several Italian families such as the St. Angels, Gazianos and Ingrassias.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Midway Village Museum created a living history village on the premises as well, building a turn-of-the-century town. At present the Victorian Village includes 26 historic structures and heritage gardens that recreate daily life in northern Illinois from the era of 1890-1910.

The Museum continues to work to collect, preserve and share the stories of Rockford's diverse residents. We hope that you will join us for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary open house celebration on June 16, 2024 from 12 p.m.-6 p.m. The event is free to the public.

Food will be available for purchase. Help us celebrate our past and envision our future.

## 45th annual *Festa Italiana* scheduled August 2-4

The 45th annual *Festa Italiana*, sponsored by the Greater Rockford Italian American Association, will be held August 2-4, 2024, at 4000 St. Francis Drive. The *Festa* is Rockford's oldest annual festival and is the second-longest of its kind in the U.S.

Fun, food and family provide the foundation for the three-day event, which features great Italian food and pastries, continuous entertainment, an Italian Cultural Tent, bocce tournaments, children's crafts, souvenirs and much more.

GRIAA is a non-profit organization, staffed solely by volunteers and serves as a conservatory of Italian culture and traditions. One of its primary purposes is to raise funds for annual scholarships for local Italian-American families to defray the cost of a Catholic school education. To date, the *Festa* has raised more than \$800,000 for scholarships.

For information, check out Facebook or log onto [www.festaitaliana.rockford.com](http://www.festaitaliana.rockford.com).





## Photo highlights from Fall 2023 events



**Family photos from GRIAA's Hall of Fame Dinner, October 14, 2023. (At left) Hall of Fame recipient Frank Valentine Family: Jason Berg, Sarah Valentine, Lisa Valentine, Frank Valentine, Cole Timmerwilke, Emily Timmerwilke, Mary Valentine Justin Schwanberger. (Above) Bove's Auto and Truck Service received Special Recognition for Business; Bove Family: (from left) Kelly and Tony Bove, Mary Jeanne and Dale Streed, Sue and Anthony Bove, Joe Bove, Jim and Diane Bove, Josephine and Ron Aaronson, Dawn and Pat Johnston, Mary Charlene and Joe Orlandi and Joe Bove, Jr.**



**(Above) Dan Appino received Special Recognition for Sports: Appino Family: Maddie, Tressa, Dan, Pam and Patrick. (At right) Hall of Fame recipient Father Jim Ciaramitaro (center), with Brother Jim Defresne (left) and Father Robert Melnick (right).**



**John Falzone and Shirley Fedeli, two GRIAA Hall of Famers who passed away in 2023, were memorialized at the Hall of Fame dinner.**



**Flanked by Mario Mirabile (U.S. flag) and Gabriele Mirabile (Italian flag), Hall of Fame and Special Recognition recipients were honored in the St. Anthony of Padua Memory Garden following the Columbus Day Mass. (From left), Anthony Bove, Joe Bove, Frank Valentine, Dan Appino and Father Jim Ciaramitaro.**



**The 10 exchange students from Ferentino, Italy, enjoy a moment as they are recognized at the RISCA's Taste of Italy in November. At right is RISCA president Dina Getty and her granddaughter Ava Getty.**



Greater Rockford Italian American Association – GRIAA

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*Naomi Stillitano, a Calabrian native, is named queen of the 2024 Rose Bowl Parade.*

*The high school student is the Rose Bowl Parade Queen of Italian ancestry. Story, photo on Page 3.*

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# PAPPAGALLO



## Spring, Summer 2024 Calendar

### March

**16-17** – St. Joseph Altars at St. Anthony, St. Bernadette and Holy Family churches, Rockford; St. Bernadette Church, Loves Park

### August

**2-4** – 45th Annual *Festa Italiana*,  
4000 St. Francis Drive, Rockford

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