

A Lifetime of *Festa*: Jay Villani Honored by the Greater Rockford Italian American Association

By Karla Manarchy Clark

Ask Jay Villani about 30 years of service to Rockford's Italian American community, and he gets a little quiet. Not one to boast, he's a man who would rather "do" than "talk." And "do" he does! And that's why the Greater Rockford Italian American Association (GRIAA) is inducting him into the Hall of Fame.



Jay Villani

Rockford, Through and Through

Villani was born and raised in Rockford and has never left. He grew up on the west side, attending St. Patrick's grade school before going on to West High School and Guilford. It's the kind of hometown loyalty that shows up again and again in his story — a man who has spent his whole life exactly where he started, building something lasting for the people around him. For 26 years, Villani has run his own business, Elite Gutter Service, a testament to the same steady, hands-on work ethic that's also defined his volunteer life.

Italian, Through and Through

It was Villani's great grandparents who immigrated to America. "I'm one hundred percent Italian," he says proudly, "with Venetian, Sicilian, and Roman blood." Villani's heritage threads through three distinct regions of Italy and, in many ways, mirrors the diversity of Rockford's own Italian American community.

"I've been going to *Festa* my whole life," Villani said. It

Continued on Page 5

Festa Italiana's Secret Ingredient: Joy

By Paul Anthony Arco

Every year, on the first night of *Festa Italiana*, volunteer Joy Parlapiano stands atop the hill at Boylan High School and looks out over the crowd below. She sees festivalgoers enjoying the music, food and bocce ball at Rockford's longest-running festival. After months of planning, Parlapiano, one of *Festa's* driving forces, gives herself a moment to take it all in.

"It's the best feeling ever," she says. "It's just a chance to remind myself that all of our hard work is worth it."

For the past 26 years, Parlapiano has been instrumental in organizing *Festa Italiana*, the largest fundraiser for the Greater Rockford Italian American Association.

For her efforts, Parlapiano has been named to the GRIAA Hall of Fame. She will be inducted during a special celebration on October 3.

"Joy is *Festa* personified," says Karen Cantele, co-chair of the GRIAA board and another important *Festa* volunteer. "She has brought such organization to *Festa* behind the scenes; it runs like a well-oiled machine. She works through every obstacle and problem with vigor and competence."

"It's truly an honor," says Parlapiano, who works as a contract administrator for Area Erectors. "I don't do this for the recognition. Everyone works so hard all year round to put on a great event, and it gets bigger every year. I'm proud to be a part of something special that takes a lot of effort. We couldn't do it without the volunteers."



Joy Zinna Parlapiano

Parlapiano's path to *Festa* began through another volunteer role. She served for 10 years as president of the fan club at Winnebago High School, where her children attended, before she was recruited to help with *Festa*. She also serves on the

Continued on Page 4



Rockford native and softball legend Kathy Veroni to receive special recognition

By Paul Anthony Arco



Kathy received a 2025 Humanitarian Award from the National Fastpitch Coaches Association

Kathy Veroni first learned to play softball in Rockford's parks in the 1960s, beginning a journey that would carry her from local diamonds to national recognition as one of the sport's most accomplished coaches and ambassadors. Born in Rockford, Veroni was part of Boylan High School's first graduating class in 1964, years before Title IX opened doors for girls to compete in school sports.

Four years later, she earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from Illinois State University and then a master's degree from Michigan State University.

She went on to coach Western Illinois University's women's softball team for 34 years, retiring in 2005 with 869 wins, 11 conference championships and eight NCAA national tournament appearances—good for a place among the top 15 winningest coaches in NCAA history at the time.

Veroni is a member of four halls of fame: the National Fastpitch Coaches Association, Illinois State University Athletics, Western Illinois University Athletics and the Illinois chapter of USA Softball.

This fall, Veroni will receive another honor: a special recognition award in the Sports category from the Greater Rockford Italian American Association, at its October 3 celebration.

For Veroni, the recognition is rooted as much in family as in softball.

"I accept this award on behalf of my maternal and paternal grandparents who came to Rockford more than 100 years ago from Florence and Sicily," says Veroni. "They loved their children and grandchildren and sacrificed for them to have a wonderful life. I also accept this honor on behalf of my parents, James and Josephine Cascio Veroni, who inspired me and future generations to pursue their goals, embrace challenges and always give their best."

"I loved seeing my parents in the softball stands when I played for Williams Park and the Rockford Comets," she says. "They were always there for me with smiles when we won and empathy when we lost."

Her influence has extended beyond the field as well: earlier this year, the Illinois House of Representatives recognized Veroni after she received the 2025 Humanitarian Award from the National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

"She's an Italian hero," says Veroni's friend, Bernice Marinelli. "Kathy is a cheerleader for others. She takes a personal investment in things that come her way. If you have a problem, Kathy has a solution. She's about success."

Veroni has called Macomb, Ill., home for the past 48 years. She's a master gardener, involved in the Grow Illinois Food Together (GIFT) garden, which provides thousands of pounds of food annually to the Macomb community. She also dabbles in woodworking, often donating pieces for charity events.

Celebrating her Italian roots

Veroni is deeply proud of her Italian roots, tracing her family's journey to Rockford through grandparents who came from Florence and Sicily and built a life centered on sacrifice, opportunity and family.

Growing up, Veroni remembers Sunday dinners with relatives and cousins on her mother's side. "Family is our legacy," she says. "We made a commitment to family. In my case, it was quite a team willing to make sacrifices for each other and blend

Continued on page 3



Kathy coached the Western Illinois University softball team for 34 years.



Kathy Veroni ... Continued from Page 2



Kathy was a member of the Rockford Comets, an amateur team who competed around the state.

together.”

Veroni came from an athletic family. In the 1940s, her mother, Josephine Veroni, played softball for Roper Industries in an industrial Rockford league. Her dad, Jim Veroni, played travel baseball and even had a tryout with the New York Yankees.

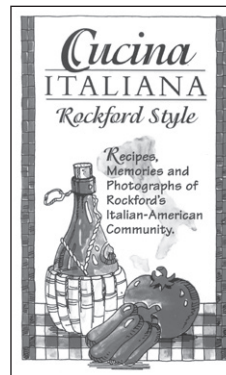
Since Veroni had no high school team to play for, she joined an amateur team, the Rockford Comets, who competed around the state. The team was formed by Jim Johnson and Bob Bloom, who coached the team because their wives wanted to play competitive softball. She also suited up for the Pekin Lettes, the longest-running fastpitch softball team in the country. Veroni played catcher, shortstop and second base.

In addition, Veroni founded and coached the women's semi-professional Macomb Magic softball team from 1979-1985. The team competed in five nationals and two Olympic Sports Festivals. Veroni has authored three books and written for several softball-related publications, including the *Softball Coaching Bible*.

“I’m deeply grateful to my coaches, teammates, family, friends and supporters who believed in me and encouraged me every step of the way,” Veroni says.

Today, Veroni points to the growth of the sport—now played by millions of girls through schools, clubs and travel teams—as evidence of how far the game has come since her own Rockford beginnings.

“Rockford provided summer programs and other opportunities for girls like me and continues to do so,” she says. “The future is bright.”



**Now available
for \$35**
(checks only, payable to GRIAA).

**Quantities are limited,
so don't wait!**

PICK UP LOCATION:

Law Office of Ferolie & Perrecone, Ltd.
321 W. State Street, Suite 202,
Rockford, Illinois

Monday–Friday | 9:00 AM–4:30 PM

Please call (815) 962-2700 before arriving for
secured-building entry instructions.

*Cookbook Shipping Information

If you wish to have a cookbook shipped
please add \$13 to your order.



Buon appetito!

The contributors lovingly and proudly share with us not only their treasured family memories which constitute an important part of our Italian heritage. By demonstrating to us what they ate and how they prepared it, they tell the story of immigrant life to future generations.

ECCO! (So here it is)... “Cucina Italiana, Rockford Style”—a unique and wonderful collection of Rockford's beloved Italian foods and family vignettes.

Buon Appetito!

Frank G. St. Angel

Cucina Italiana Committee



Left to Right in Rear:
Tom Ferrara, “Toni” Tarara, Bea Ricotta (with newborn Magdalena),
Jo Varisco, Gene Fedeli, Sally Cicero.

Left to Right in Front:
Angie Lombardozi, Carmella LaLoggia, Mary Hope Ferrara,
Gloria Fiorenza, Shirley Fedeli

Not Pictured:
Marie Sherman, Joyce Fatone



Festa Italiana's Secret Ingredient: Joy ... *Continued from Page 1*

GRIAA board of directors.

"One of my co-workers, Vicky Circelli, was looking for a co-chair of the beef tent at *Festa*," she says. "I did that for a while and then was asked to be on the *Festa* board. As volunteers stepped away, I stepped up." Parlapiano went on to serve as *Festa* chair in 2014 and has been on the executive board since then. She also serves on the GRIAA Hall of Fame banquet committee.

It takes many hands to plan and execute *Festa Italiana*. The executive board has 12 members, and 100 volunteers serve on the steering committees. That does not include the many additional volunteers who work during the three-day event.

In her role, Parlapiano wears many hats. She is responsible for paying the bills, leading meetings, serving as co-editor of the event magazine and making sure the committee's task list



Joy Zinna Parlapiano, Allison Parlapiano, Emily Parlapiano

stays on track. In the weeks leading up to the festival, she is busy doing media interviews. "It takes a couple of months to wrap up each event," she says. "We start gearing up for next year as soon as possible. The only month we take a break is December."

Finding musical entertainment is one of the first priorities. Parlapiano, Michele Fosberg and other volunteers scour the area for the best performers, most of them Italian acts. Some acts come back year after year, but Parlapiano and the crew also look for new musicians to keep things fresh. Some performers reach out to *Festa* as well.

"We're always trying different things," she says. "That includes food. But our philosophy is, 'Why fix something that's not broken?' We have a good thing going."

Festa Italiana recently completed its 47th year. The only year *Festa* did not take place was during the COVID pandemic in 2020. "It was very weird having the year off," she says. "But the silver lining was that we had an opportunity to focus on making improvements to the event."

Putting on the biggest Italian event in the Rockford area means a lot to Parlapiano and her family. She loves playing bocce ball with her daughters, even though her responsibilities leave no time to play during *Festa* weekend.

"It always reminds me of growing up around Italian traditions, such as making *pasta al sugo* and *Italian cookies* around the holidays. I miss those days. *Festa* keeps those traditions alive in me and my children."

Cantele sees that dedication as essential to *Festa's* success.

"Joy lives for the success of *Festa Italiana*," Cantele says. "And that's a big job. Her love of all things Italian, family and fun are the main ingredients of *Festa*."



GreenState
MORTGAGE

Frank Valentine

Vice President/Mortgage
Lending

NMLS# 462776

Apply Online!



3963 N Perryville Rd, Rockford, IL 61114

O: 815-986-5543 | C: 815-742-1691

frankvalentine@greenstate.org | GreenState.org



Jay Villani... *Continued from Page 1*

wasn't until about 30 years ago, though, that he stepped from spectator into volunteer, joining forces with members of the Venetian Club to help run the bocce tournaments. The bocce tournaments are a popular event at *Festa*—sometimes there have been as many as 100 games going on over the weekend—on the hour, every hour—with people from all age groups.

From Bocce Courts to Chairman

What started as running bocce grew steadily over the years. Villani took on more responsibility, helping steer the *Festa* in new directions to keep it financially sustainable.

In 2015, he was appointed *Festa* chairman, overseeing the planning and logistics of the annual event.

“Almost Like a Family Reunion”

Ask Villani what keeps him coming back year after year, decade after decade, and his answer has nothing to do with titles or recognition.

“I love seeing the people of *Festa* every year,” he said. “It’s almost like a family reunion. There’re a tremendous number of people we wouldn’t see otherwise.”

That sentiment — community as chosen family — may be the truest measure of what Villani has built. *Festa* isn’t just an event he organizes; it’s a once-a-year homecoming for a whole network of people who might otherwise lose touch entirely.

Family, and a Trip Still Waiting

Villani has two children, Erika and Nicholas, and one grandson, Luca. In 2020, the family had planned a trip to Italy



Tom Villani, Jay Villani and Erika Villani

together — a chance, perhaps, to walk the ground his great-grandparents once called home. But COVID-19 put those plans on hold. They talk about planning a trip soon.

Though Villani himself doesn’t speak Italian, that hasn’t stood in the way of a lifelong devotion to preserving and celebrating his family’s heritage — one bocce match, one family dinner, and one *Festa* at a time.

A Well-Earned Honor

Jay Villani has served the Italian American community well, and GRIAA’s recognition is a fitting tribute to 30 years of dedicated service. Jay Villani never set out to be recognized. He just kept showing up — and in doing so, helped make sure generations of Rockford’s Italian American community could keep showing up to celebrate their heritage. Congratulations, Jay, on being selected for induction into the Hall of Fame.



DAILY SPECIALS

FRESH FOOD

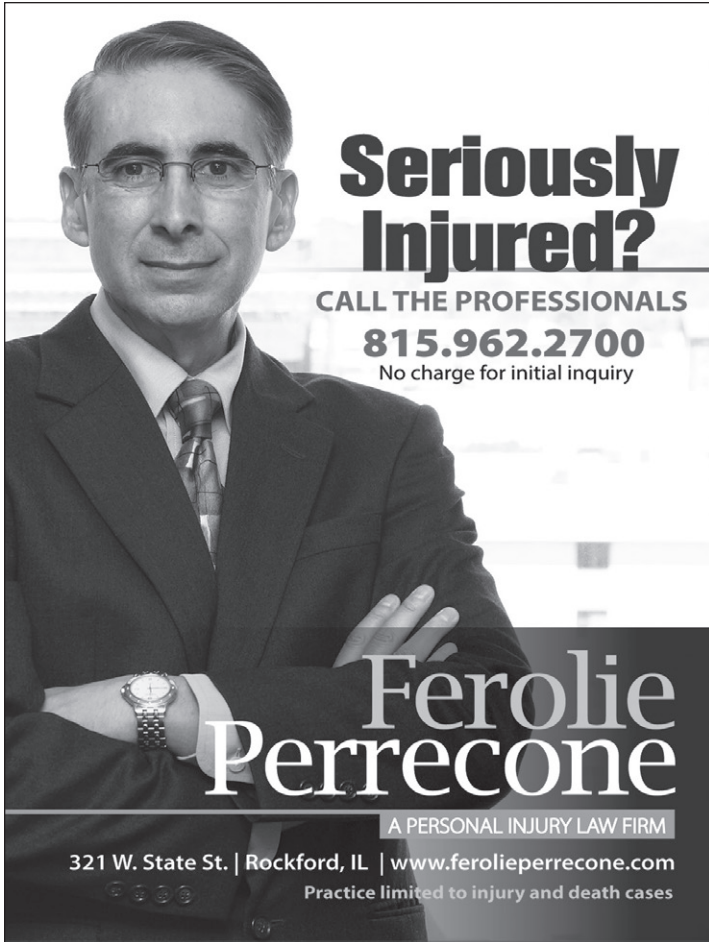
@murphyspub

@murphysrockford

(815) 986-0950





Seriously Injured?

CALL THE PROFESSIONALS
815.962.2700
No charge for initial inquiry

Ferolie Perrecone

A PERSONAL INJURY LAW FIRM

321 W. State St. | Rockford, IL | www.ferolieperrecone.com
Practice limited to injury and death cases

Let it Rain!

Elite Gutter Service

Rockford (815)397-5933
Belvidere (815)544-0237
www.elitegutter.com

Fitzgerald SINCE 1914
FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY LTD.
Caring for Families Since 1914



Riverside Chapel
3910 North Rockton Ave.
(815) 654-2484



Mulford Chapel
1860 South Mulford Rd.
(815) 226-2273

www.fitzgeraldfh.com

Bove's
Auto Repair

Serving Rockford Since 1963

**Free Pick-up and Delivery
from Home or Work**

Book your appointment online @
www.BovesAuto.com

or call us today...the old fashioned way
815-962-0412



2026 Hall of Fame and Special Recognition and Award Banquet
Saturday, October 3, 2026.

At the St. Ambrogio Club 802 Montague Street Rockford

We encourage all Hall of Fame members to attend and be recognized

6:00 p.m. Social Hour (Cash Bar Available)

6:45 p.m. Dinner: *Your choice of:*

- 1) Beef Filet Tenderloin 2) Stuffed Chicken Breast**
3) Cashew Crusted Salmon 4) Vegetarian - stuffed portobello mushroom
Pasta, Salad, and Bread are included

7:30 p.m. Award Ceremony

\$50 per person

Visit www.GRIAA.org for more information or contact
Michele Fandel: atthetropics11@yahoo.com

Please return the order form below with payment to:

GRIAA – Hall of Fame Dinner

P.O Box 2041

Loves Park, IL 61130



2026 Hall of Fame Dinner Reservation - Tables seat 8 each:

Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____
Name _____	Dinner Choice _____

***All seating is assigned – Every effort will be made to honor seating requests.**

Please seat me with: _____ or _____



My Italian Citizenship at a Crossroads

How Italy's 2025 citizenship law and Europe's top court could determine my case

By Frank Perrecone

My long journey toward recognition of Italian citizenship by descent (*jure sanguinis*) suffered a serious setback in June. The Specialized Court of Palermo denied my petition and ordered me to pay approximately \$1,770 in litigation costs to the Ministry of the Interior. I have now spent about \$12,350 pursuing citizenship, and an appeal may cost another \$2,800.

The ruling may not end my case. My next step depends on whether I can prove that Italy's former citizenship law governs my application or whether the Court of Justice of the European Union invalidates or limits Italy's 2025 restrictions.

What Italy Changed in 2025

Italy sharply restricted citizenship by descent through Decree-Law 36 of March 28, 2025, which Parliament later converted, with amendments, into Law 74 of May 23, 2025.

Under the former law, Italian citizenship generally passed from an Italian citizen to a child at birth, potentially through several generations, unless an event such as renunciation broke the line. The new law treats many people born abroad who hold another citizenship as never having acquired Italian citizenship unless they qualify for an exception.

The law does more than impose a two-generation limit. A person may qualify if a parent or grandparent held only Italian citizenship, including at death. Another exception may apply if a parent lived in Italy for at least two continuous years after acquiring Italian citizenship and before the child's birth or adoption. These requirements exclude many descendants of Italians who naturalized in the United States or elsewhere.

The Grandfathering Rules

Law 74/2025 preserves the former law for certain people who had already begun seeking recognition. It covers a properly documented administrative application filed with the appropriate Italian consulate or municipality by March 27, 2025. It also covers a later appointment if the consulate communicated the appointment by that date. A judicial petition filed by March 27 should also remain governed by the former law.

Why I Filed a Citizenship Lawsuit

Although I acquired both American and Italian citizenship at birth, Italy must formally recognize my Italian citizenship. An Italian court or the appropriate government agency must determine whether I qualify under the applicable law. My lawsuit asked the Palermo court to recognize my citizenship by judicial decree.

Why Palermo Denied My Petition

The Palermo court had jurisdiction because my grandfather

was born in Corleone, Sicily. He remained an Italian citizen when my mother was born in the United States in 1931 and did not become a naturalized American until 1935.

The court applied the new law because neither my grandfather nor my mother held only Italian citizenship at death, and the record did not establish a grandfathering exception. It therefore refused to recognize me as an Italian citizen by descent.

I appeared at the Italian Consulate in Chicago on July 30, 2024, and submitted my application well before the cutoff. Inexplicably, my Italian lawyer failed to submit proof of that filing to the Palermo court. Whether this missing evidence can somehow be presented to a court at this time is currently being evaluated.

Italy Asks Europe's Top Court to Weigh In

On July 23, 2026, Italy's Constitutional Court asked the Court of Justice of the European Union to decide whether Law 74/2025 complies with European Union treaties. Italy's Constitutional Court had previously concluded that, under the new law, people born abroad who acquired that country's citizenship at birth never acquired Italian citizenship unless an exception applies. Most first- and second-generation Italian Americans do not qualify for one.

Italy's Highest Court Issues a Favorable Decision

Italy's Court of Cassation recently ruled that the 1912 citizenship law granted Italian citizenship at birth to children of Italian immigrants born in countries, such as the United States, that automatically grant citizenship based on birthplace (*jure soli*). Those children therefore held dual citizenship (*bipolidia*) at birth. The court also ruled that they retained Italian citizenship even if their Italian parent later became a citizen of another country.

The decision put to rest the so-called "minor issue," which had blocked many Italian Americans from recognition of citizenship by descent.

The favorable ruling does not, by itself, overturn Palermo's refusal to recognize my citizenship. I need the court to decide my case under the law in effect before March 28, 2025. Under that law, I need only establish an unbroken line of citizenship: my Italian grandfather passed citizenship to my mother at birth, and she passed it to me at my birth.

Where My Case Stands

Although I have until January 8, 2027 to appeal, my Italian legal team is currently in the process of formalizing recommendations as to available legal options. For now, I can hope the recommended legal options will pave the way to Italian citizenship.



Hey "CUZ"!

By Karla Manarchy Clark

If you are Italian American, you're related to everybody, right? When you were young, you called the next-door neighbor "Aunt" Mary out of respect, even though you weren't blood relatives. Your dad's best friend was "Uncle" Tony. And your mom's sister's friend's kids were your cousins.

And, if you're Italian American, it's likely you've heard your non-Italian friends say, "You must be related to everybody!" We are a welcoming people, aren't we?

But do you really know the actual, official relationships within your family? Is Cousin Joe your second cousin or is he your first cousin once removed? Does it even matter? Maybe not — but it's fun to know! "Consanguinity" is the state of being related by blood to another person. It refers to individuals who share at least one common biological ancestor.

Ready to find out about that Cousin Joe? Take a look at the chart above. Start with "You" in the left column. Find the ancestor you both share. Then match your connection with the other person's connection across the top. Where the two meet — that's your relationship!

For example: If your grandfather and Joe's grandfather were brothers, you're both grandchildren of the same great-grandparents. Find "You" on the left, slide over to the "Great Grandparents" column — and boom. Second Cousins!

Here is how the family tree breaks down to determine cousin relationships based on your closest shared ancestors:

- **First Cousins:** You share grandparents. (You are the children of siblings).
- **Second Cousins:** You share great-grandparents. (You are the children of first cousins).
- **Third Cousins:** You share great-great-grandparents. (You are the children of second cousins).

If you and Joe are in the same generation (meaning you both have the same number of steps up to those great-grandparents), you are strictly second cousins.

If Joe is a generation above or below you, that is where the term "removed" comes in:

- If Joe is the son of your second cousin, he is your second cousin once removed (one generation down).
- If Joe is the father of your second cousin, he is also your second cousin once removed (one generation up).

So, the next time someone asks if you are related to everyone at the *Festa* — you can smile, pull out this chart, and prove it!

You					Great-Great Grandparents
				Great Grandparents	Great-Grand Uncles & Aunts
			Grandparents	Great Uncles & Aunts	First Cousins Twice Removed
	Parents	Uncles & Aunts	First Cousins Once Removed	Second Cousins Once Removed	Third Cousins Once Removed
	Brothers & Sisters	First Cousins	Second Cousins	Third Cousins	
Children	Nephews & Nieces	First Cousins Once Removed	Second Cousins Once Removed	Third Cousins Once Removed	
Grand Children	Great Nephews & Nieces	First Cousins Twice Removed	Second Cousins Twice Removed	Third Cousins Twice Removed	
Great-Grand Children	Great-Grand Nephews & Nieces	First Cousins Thrice Removed	Second Cousins Thrice Removed	Third Cousins Thrice Removed	

"Removed" means one generation apart from a direct cousin relationship.



Sister Cities of Rockford and Ferentino, Italy, Mark 20 Year

By Valeri DeCastris

For more than a century, Rockford and Ferentino, Italy, have shared close ties. In 2006, the two communities made that bond official by becoming Sister Cities. The partnership honors the contributions of Italian Americans to Rockford and recognizes Ferentino's important role in the city's immigration history.

Rockford's Italian Sister City program grew out of discussions between the DeCastris and Giorgi families in Rockford and abroad. The effort became a project of the Greater Rockford Italian American Association (GRIAA). In 2005, an Italian Sister City committee was formed, and its dedicated members met regularly to build support for a formal partnership. In May 2006, Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey and Ferentino Mayor Piergianni Fiorletta signed the official agreement at Rockford City Hall during City Council proceedings. Nine public officials from Ferentino's City Council and Pro Loco Association, its arts and cultural organization, traveled to Rockford for the ceremony and a full week of official meetings and festivities.

Ferentino: Rockford's Italian Sister City

Ferentino is an ancient, walled hill town of 21,000 people located about 45 minutes southeast of Rome. The city reflects three distinct architectural periods and includes Roman ruins, ancient markets, amphitheatres and elaborate stone gates. Its major industries include pharmaceuticals, soaps, textiles, clay bricks, electronics and food production.

Saint Ambrogio, a fourth-century Roman army cavalry centurion who was tortured and executed for his Christian faith, is highly revered in Ferentino and codified in the city's legal statutes. In 1918, immigrants from Ferentino founded Rockford's St. Ambrogio Society. Today, it is the last remaining Italian social club from the many that once existed in south Rockford, historically a predominantly Italian American enclave of the city. The St. Ambrogio Club was once attached to St. Anthony of Padua Parish and served as the Americanization Center, providing assimilation assistance for Italian immigrants. The building was later rolled on logs by horseback from the parish down Ferguson Street over several days to its present-day location on Montague Street. It remains a vibrant club today.

Two Decades of Partnership

The Rockford Italian Sister Cities Alliance (RISCA) has worked tirelessly for two decades to promote the partnership between

Rockford and Ferentino. RISCA was formally established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2017. Over the years, the committee has sponsored student and adult exchanges, student pen pal programs in both cities, an Italian floral garden and commemorative plaque at the Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza, cultural and educational programs and displays, and peace pole installations at both city halls and at Rockford's St. Ambrogio Club. Rockford also hosted a State Sister Cities Association annual meeting. RISCA members have remained active in the Rockford Sister Cities Advisory Commission and Sister Cities International, which was created in 1956 by President Eisenhower to promote "peace through people."

Get Involved

RISCA has benefited from generous support from businesses, individuals, nonprofit organizations, public officials and institutions throughout the years. Its main fundraiser is the popular annual Taste of Italy, held each November.

All Rockford-area residents are encouraged to join RISCA. Membership is open to everyone and is not limited to those of Italian descent or those with roots in Ferentino.

Visit Rockford Italian Sister Cities Alliance on Facebook and the internet at ourisca.org. Email ideas to Risca2006@gmail.com, or visit saintambrogio.com, proloco.ferentino.fr.it, gorockford.com and rockfordil.gov.

RISCA is deeply appreciative of the support its milestone anniversaries have received from businesses, public officials, individuals and organizations.

Here's to the next 20 years of friendship.

In memory of Gino and Palma Reali, Ferentino natives and Rockford residents who were instrumental in helping to develop our Sister City by providing international communications and hosting many lovely committee meetings at their home.

RISCA annual Fundraiser Taste of Italy XI

Sunday, Nov. 8 at the Venetian Club
contact Risca2006@gmail.com for more information



Celebrate Italian American Heritage Month with GRIAA

October is Italian American Heritage Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the rich history, culture, traditions, and contributions of Italian Americans throughout our nation.

This October, the Greater Rockford Italian American Association (GRIAA) invites the community to come together for a month filled with fun, educational, and community-focused events for all ages.

From food and wine to history, music, family traditions, and cultural experiences, GRIAA's October events offer something for everyone. Whether you are reconnecting with your Italian roots or simply interested in discovering more about Italy and Italian American culture, we invite you to join us!

GRIAA's October Events

October 3 – GRIAA Hall of Fame and Special Recognition Dinner

St. Ambrogio Club

Celebrate this year's honorees, **Joy Parlapiano, Jay Vallani, and Kathy Veroni** at an evening honoring them. All seats are reserved. Go to GRIAA.org for reservation information.

October 4 – GRIAA Hall of Fame Mass

St. Anthony of Padua Church **FREE EVENT**

Current and past Hall of Fame recipients and their families are warmly invited to join us for this special Mass. **10:30 a.m.**

October 10 – Milwaukee Shopping, Food & Fun Bus Trip

Join GRIAA for a day trip to Milwaukee filled with Italian food, shopping, and fun! The coach bus will depart Rockford at 8:00 a.m.

\$50 a person - Go to GRIAA.org to reserve a spot.

Highlights include:

- **Sciortino's Bakery**, which opened in 1947 and is known for its fresh breads and delicious baked goods.
- **Glorioso's Market**, a Milwaukee tradition since 1946, featuring Italian pastas, meats, cheeses, baked goods, beverages, and more. Be sure to stop at the deli for a sandwich and browse the selection of Italian wines, liqueurs, and sodas.
- **Milwaukee Public Market**, featuring an exciting mix of specialty shops, food stalls, and local vendors. Don't miss the olive oil and vinegar shop!
- **3rd St. Market Hall**, This is the place to be if you're hungry or want to play games. There are 20 food shops in one building. PLUS, it's playtime! There's a Gaming lounge, shuffleboard, backyard games including Bags, Giant Jenga and board games.
- **Old St. Mary's Church**, We're going to include a little culture. Old Saint Mary Parish and the City of Milwaukee, both established in 1846, are the same age. The most historically significant Catholic church for Italian immigrants in Milwaukee was Blessed Virgin of Pompeii, often called the "Little Pink Church". Built in 1904 in the Third Ward from the 1890s until its demolition in 1967.

It promises to be a wonderful day of Italian food, shopping, friendship, and fun!

October 11 – Italian Cooking Class with Maria Tarara Caruana

Verdi Club

FREE EVENT

Learn new recipes and Italian cooking traditions with Maria Tarara Caruana.

Reservations are available through Eventbrite.

October 13 – Painting with Angie Scordato

Venetian Club

\$25 per person – Go to GRIAA.org to reserve your spot.

Spend a special evening celebrating Italian artistry with Rockford artist Angie Scordato! You'll create a beautiful Italian-inspired scene featuring vibrant lemons and the sparkling Mediterranean Sea. Whether you're an experienced artist or simply looking for a fun and creative evening, Angie will guide you step-by-step. At the end of the evening, you'll leave with a beautiful work of art and great memories. A cash bar will be available.

October 16 – Wine Tasting

Artale & Company

\$20 per person

Join us for an enjoyable evening of wine tasting at Artale & Company. Last year's event was a wonderful experience, and Artale's knowledgeable staff did an excellent job presenting and explaining the wines. We look forward to another fun evening!

October 18 – Italian Cooking Class with Mimi Leombruni, former owner of Leombruni's Restaurant in Byron

Verdi Club

FREE EVENT

Come learn, cook, and enjoy the flavors and traditions of Italian cuisine with Mimi Leombruni.

October 23 – Movie Screening: *Chiara*

St. Anthony of Padua Church

FREE EVENT

Enjoy a special screening of *Chiara*, the inspiring story of **St. Clare of Assisi**. The film is presented entirely in Italian.

Italian themed Centerpiece Making Workshop – Date and Location TBA

Join us in the celebrations!

GRIAA is proud to bring the community together throughout October to celebrate Italian heritage, family, friendship, and tradition.

For updates, additional event details, and information about upcoming activities, visit the www.GRIAA.org and the Greater Rockford Italian American Association Facebook page.

GRIAA remains committed to promoting Italian culture, sponsoring community events, and supporting charitable and educational programs throughout the Rockford area.

Come celebrate with us this October!



Festa 2026



Women's 2026 Bocce Winning Team
Kathy Berg, Keyanna Washington, Jacquie Moore, Ashley Noto



Men's 2026 Bocce Winning Team
Jay Villani, Joe Savala, Nick Villani, James Bryant



On August 16th, 2026, the Amici Italiani Dance Troupe and Youth Troupe performed at the 123rd Annual San Rocco di Potenza Festa hosted by St. William Catholic Church in Chicago.



Festa 2026



Thank you to our young volunteers!
Left to right: Ethan Beto, Sam Beto, Bill Beto
Benjamin Boulhous, Jonah Boulhous, Nolan Beto



Opening Ceremonies - with Mike Maffioli, Festa Executive
Committee and Guests

Festa 2026 Mass



Bishop David J. Malloy and Deacon Peter Addotta
Process to the altar



3rd Order of Secular Franciscans



Sicilian Ladies Club



Lombardy and Veneto Featured at *Festa Italiana's* Cultural Tent

By Frank Perrecone

Lombardy and Veneto were the featured regions at this summer's *Festa Italiana* Cultural Tent. Displays and artifacts highlighted the history, culture, and traditions of cities and villages throughout both regions, giving visitors an opportunity to explore this rich part of Italy.

Festival guests also enjoyed cooking demonstrations featuring risotto and Italian fish and vegetable stew served with polenta. Tastings followed each demonstration on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

Rockford Italian genealogist Steve Salvato helped many families research their Italian ancestry throughout the three-day festival.

Also featured was GRIAA's tribute display honoring the late Mike and Nora Doyle. Mike, the longtime editor of *Pappagallo* and a 2021 GRIAA Hall of Fame inductee, served as editor of *Immigration Histories of Rockford Italian Families*, which was first published in 2019.



Elaborate displays brought the history, art and traditions of northern Italy to life inside the Cultural Tent.



A display of Italian culinary traditions helped set the scene for the Cultural Tent's cooking demonstrations.



Cultural Tent co-chairs Rosie Scalisi Sheridan and Frank Perrecone helped bring the sights, traditions and flavors of Italy to this year's Festa.



The Cultural Tent set-up crew takes a well-earned break for a group photo



Robyn, Larry, Nancy and Jay Ferraro share cooking tips with the audience while preparing Italian fish and vegetable stew over polenta.



Genealogist Steve Salvato helps Festa visitors trace their Italian family roots.



Marilyn Shigley tending to the risotto while Anita Wetzberger shares cooking tips with the Cultural Tent audience.



A special Cultural Tent display honors the lives and legacy of Mike and Nora Doyle.



Greater Rockford Italian American Association – GRIAA
PAPPAGALLO
P.O. Box 2041
Loves Park IL 61130

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROCKFORD, IL
PERMIT NO. 1



One of many displays at Festa Italiana's Cultural Tent. Story, photos on page 14 and 15



We want to hear from you. Contact us

Frank Perrecone, *Co-Editor* – frankaperrecone@aol.com

Paul Anthony Arco, *Co-Editor* – paularco@aol.com

Karen Cantele, *Assistant Editor* – kkcantele22@gmail.com

Karla Clark, *Contributing Writer* – karla.clark@comcast.net

Advertising rates

One-quarter page \$150, one-half page \$225, full page \$375

Meridian
PRINT. PROMO. FULFILL.

We are a direct extension of your brand.

We do a little bit of everything to help manage your brand, look, and messaging across a variety of mediums.



Let's work together

www.meridian-direct.com