

Volume 8
Issue 4
Spring 2026

*A note from the
Editor:*

*Benvenuta
primavera!*

Ciao a tutti!

Grazie mille to all who contributed to this edition. There was much more to report to our state-wide members than I expected especially after the "brutal" winter we all experienced. For myself, and I suspect for many others, forced isolation from social situations we enjoy so much as Italians can be a concern. I missed a few activities due to family obligations also, but I am so grateful for the support, prayers and words of comfort by all of you – what great friends I am blessed with. My "preemie" granddaughter arrived in good health to our family's welcoming arms.

For future issues, please submit articles and pictures to:

colette.sciscilo@gmail.com

il Giornale

Newsletter for the Grand Lodge of Virginia
Order Sons & Daughters of Italy in America

A note from the Grand Lodge President

Cari amici,

Well, here we are into Spring and Summer certainly isn't too far away. I'm sure that everyone has their Summer vacation plans made and are looking forward to the fun they will bring. My wife and I don't normally do Summer trips, we like cooler weather and tend to vacation in the Fall instead. Whatever your plans are, I pray for a safe and enjoyable time for you and your family.

I had the honor of visiting several of our lodges and participating in the installation ceremonies for their new officers. I wish I could have attended all five ceremonies, but scheduling conflicts and some minor health issues prevented me from traveling. Carolyn and I were, as always, greeted warmly and treated with special attention. We enjoyed each visit and always look forward to visiting our local lodges. The "family" bond we all share makes us special as far as fraternal organizations go. I love it!

Plans for the 2027 Biennial Convention are well on their way. The host hotel, Courtyard by Marriott/Williamsburg, has been selected and the contract has been signed. We will now move on to secure catering, entertainment, etc. The dates are April 1-4, 2027. Originally, we had settled on dates in March due to better room rates, but after reviewing our bylaws and checking with our National office we must have our conventions in April, May or June. Fortunately, Larry Brennan's superior negotiating skills paid off, and the hotel agreed to hold the rate into April for us. It is a very nice hotel and should suit our needs perfectly. More information will be sent out as we move forward.

Just a few quick words about what is going on at our National headquarters. Everyone there is currently working hard on the 2026 NELA which takes place May 28th. The Public Image Committee has sent out questionnaires to all lodges asking for information on their implementation of the new OSDIA logo. All GLV presidents have received this information and are acting on it as I write this.

The Grand Lodge of Virginia's website address is: www.vaosdia.org

Don't forget our picnic coming up on Saturday, June 27th at Giuseppe Verdi Lodge. Colette is inserting a copy of the flyer in this issue.

Respectfully,

*Aldo Funai
Grand Lodge President*



ORDER
Sons and
Daughters
of Italy
IN AMERICA

Grand Lodge of Virginia Quarterly Meeting

The Grand Lodge of Virginia will meet for its quarterly meeting on *Saturday, June 27, 2026.*

The meeting will be held at the Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315, 7342 Verdi Lane, Mechanicsville, VA. Council members and lodge presidents are asked to arrive no later than 10:30 a.m. for the Foundation meeting and meeting of the Lodge Presidents.

Please see the flyer/information welcoming our members from far and wide to our picnic celebrating our great nation's 250th Birthday! The picnic will begin at 1:00 p.m., directly after the conclusion of our quarterly meeting. We will feature picnic foods, music, games of cornhole, bocce and bingo.

Don't forget to RSVP to Mary Louise Smith.



*Steven R. Kramer formally received his
Doctorate in Education, (Ed.D.)
Educational Leadership and
Organizational Innovation from
Marymount University, College of Health
& Education, on Saturday, May 16, 2026.*

*Steve celebrated this wonderful
achievement with his daughter, Katie (r),
and Dawn Falsinotti, IPP of IHL (l).*



*Dr. Kitty Crosby, Steve's dissertation
advisor, presents his hood (r).*

*Steve is currently serving our Italian
organization as the Financial
Secretary of Italian Heritage Lodge
of Fairfax #2517, Recording
Secretary of the Grand Lodge of
Virginia, and as a member of the
Budget, Audit & Finance Committee
of OSDIA National Offices.*



*Congratulazioni,
caro amico!*

GRAND LODGE OF VIRGINIA QUARTERLY MEETING

and

USA 250th YEAR CELEBRATION

The Grand Lodge of Virginia extends an invitation to
your membership in joining a day of Celebration
of our country's
250th Anniversary of Independence.

!!COME JOIN US!!

WHEN: Saturday, June 27, 2026
7242 Verdi Lane
Mechanicsville, VA 23116

TIME: 1:00 p.m.
After Grand Lodge Quarterly Meeting
Bocce, Cornholes, Bingo, Music
Hamburgers and Hot Dogs provided by GLVA.
Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish!

Please coordinate with Mary Louise Smith

How many will be attending?

What dish will you bring?

(MLSmith912@comcast.net) or

(804) 241-2185



Local Lodges

Peninsula Italian American Lodge #2145

March 2026 – April 2026

(Submitted by Beverly Amante)

Peninsula Italian American Lodge Holds 2026 Installation

On Sunday, March 15, 2026, members of the Peninsula Italian American Lodge came together to install our new officers.

One of our trustees, Michelle Romanello, oversaw the event. She found us a room at **Dock of the Bay** Restaurant in Carrollton, Virginia. As its name implies, **Dock of the Bay** is a seafood restaurant. Members were able to pick from a choice of two salads, seven entrees and two desserts.

Michelle also coordinated the St. Joseph table that we had at the installation as well as making all of us sugar cookies in the shape of Italy! She did a great job and we thank her for all her hard work.

Joining us for the installation were State President, Aldo Funai and his wife Carolyn and State Trustee and our Deputy, John Gossner.



Newly Installed PIAL Officers

Back row: Trustee Lee Jamilik, President Bob Mason, Trustee Betty Dexter, Guard Stasi Wipperman, Trustee Faye Boninu, Treasurer Jim DeLucia, Trustee Michelle Romanello
Front Row: Vice President Barbara Jamilik, Orator Bob Amato, Recording Secretary Anna D'Antonio, Financial Secretary Terry DeLucia, State President Aldo Funai, PIAL State Deputy John Gossner
Absent: Master of Ceremony Barry Robison & Trustee Mary Dolores Ciraulo



A Gathering of Brothers & Sisters

Over the past several years, PIAL has added something new to our “things to do as a lodge”. Since we have a lot of retired members, we decided to take a lesson from IHL and implement a “Lunch Bunch” into our things to do as a lodge. This came about when Bob & Bev were in the DC area and were invited to join the members of IHL for their lunch group. If my memory serves me well, I believe it was at an Indian Restaurant. We enjoyed ourselves so much that we brought it up to our members and they also thought it was a great idea since many of our members no longer drive at night and can’t make our dining outs, which

are held at night, unless someone can pick them up. Unfortunately, we don’t do them every month, but we try to get in several each year.

Above is a photo from our event on April 22nd. We met at **Saisaki Asian Bistro & Sushi Bar** in Newport News, Va. Around the table starting on the left: Nicole, Terry, Bob Amato, Barbara, Lee, Bev, Bob Amante, Lucille, Adrian, Anna Cali, Jim, Sue. Bob Mason is taking the photo.

Our Saint Joseph Table

Since we had not had one in several years, we decided to have a St. Joseph Table at our installation.

Members of the lodge made many items to contribute to the table. They included homemade breads, which included Easter bread and Soda bread, cakes, cookies, pastries and other treats.

The goodies were sold as a fundraiser for the club.

Below are a couple of pictures of the table. Unfortunately, I was unable to get a complete picture of the table because many items were purchased as soon as they were set down!



Breads below baked by Jim DeLucia



Treats included: cakes, rum balls, pizzelles, cuccidati (Sicilian Fig cookies), pizzagaina (Pizza Rustica) Easter breads, Italian bread, and several other treats. Everything that was brought in was donated by members and all of it was sold to our membership and guests.



Special Awards Given To

Members Stasi Wiperman (left) and Nicole Varanavage (below)

Both ladies received Certificates of Appreciation from President Bob Mason.

Stasi and her family have coordinated the Hampton Mosaic Festival, formerly known as the Hampton Children's Festival, for many years. Stasi, who is very crafty, comes up with an activity to do with children who visit our tent.

Nicole, who is a relatively new member, works for a local housing developments club house. In her capacity there, she can use the club house once a year for free! This year she donated her week to PIAL so that we could have a different venue for our

Christmas party. In addition to donating the building, she, along with her children, set up the hall and took everything down!



Roma Lodge #254

January 2026 – April 2026

(Submitted by Marie M. Siebeking)

In January we announced the Roma Lodge Scholarship application and the eligibility requirements for high school seniors in the 2025-2026 academic years and will be full time freshman college or trade school students. Applicants are limited to children or grandchildren of current Roma Lodge members in good standing. The scholarship funds are paid directly to the student's college, university, or trade school. The application forms for the 2025-2026 school years are available online at www.romalodge254.org.

The Roma Lodge election of officers took place at the February meeting. The list of nominees was announced and any additional members wishing to run for office could be nominated from the floor or contact nominating chairman, Paul Siebeking at 757-481-4030 or e-mail kp59pe@cox.net or John Gossner at gossnerj@verizon.net. To run for office your dues must be paid before February 1, 2026.

The election for the new officers and arbitration committee was conducted at the February meeting, and the installation of the new officers was conducted at the March meeting on March 1st.

At our March meeting we had the **Installation ceremony** for our newly elected officers. Following are pictures from the ceremony. The ceremony was conducted by our State Deputy, Robert Amante, Herald, State Trustee John Gossner, and Assistant Herald, State Orator, Paul Siebeking.

Roma Lodge #254 Installation 1 March 2026



← Our President
Marie M. Siebeking

The Installation
Team: L to R →
BevAmante, Paul
Siebeking, President
Marie, BobAmante,
and John Gossner



Newly elected officers including State Deputy and Heralds



Officers (L to R): Treasurer: Peter Langland, Financial Sec.: Michelle Knox, Trustee: Sara Galante, Orator: John Luzzi, Trustee: Judy Martin, Recording Secretary: Tae Jackson, Trustee: Matt Knox, Vice Pres.: Ellie Bove Trustee: Dono Gambano, Pres.: Marie Siebeking, State Orator: Paul Siebeking, Immed. Past Pres.: Tony Alfano, Deputy Bob Amante, State Trustee: John Gossner

Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315

April 2026

(Submitted by Mary Louise Smith)

2026 Installation of Officers For Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315



from left to right:

Aldo Funai - Trustee

Arthur Smith - Financial Secretary

Maryann DeVincentis - Trustee

John Howarth - President

Norma Marrin - Recording Secretary

Mike Bonelli - Trustee

Mike Matassa - Trustee

Daniel Martucci - Orator

Anne Marie Vaughan - Trustee

Mary Louise Smith - Mistress of Ceremony

Dexter Oliver - Trustee

NOT PRESENT - Andrew Biondi Vice President

Jeannie Whiteside - Treasurer

Lucie Martucci - Mistress of Ceremony

*Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315 presents a donation to
Henry Volunteer Fire Station
and 911 Communication in Hanover County, Virginia*



John Howarth, GVL's President, Tucker Dawson, President of Volunteer Fire Department, Arthur Smith, GLV's Financial Secretary, Chief Nick Pasker



Arthur Smith, Charlie Udriet, Director 911 Communication, John Howarth

TRIBUTE TO MRS. BEATRICE (BEA) SPINELLA SYKES

December 20, 1936 ~ December 11, 2025

Mary Louise Smith, April 12, 2026

“As members of Giuseppe Verdi Lodge, along with coming together sharing meals and laughter with other Italian Americans who enjoy their heritage, we also deal with sad times.

Today is one of those times as we come together to give tribute to a very special person. Beatrice Spinella Sykes. Not only was Bea a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, she was a special friend and mentor along with being a dedicated and inspirational sister to Verdi Lodge, her Italian American heritage organization and its members.

Regardless of her most important responsibilities in life, God and church, raising a family and I don’t use the phrase “raising a family”, lightly, just ask any of her children sitting here today, they will tell you Bea would drag them along to Verdi’s monthly meetings at very young ages, sending them outdoors to play while “meeting in progress”, Bea also worked in the business world and made time for Verdi Lodge functions.

Bea loved and was so proud of her heritage. When she belonged to an organization, she didn’t just belong. She was devoted and involved in every aspect of our lodge. Whatever she did she truly loved doing it. It was like her duty to have the Italians recognized in our community in whatever outlet made available to her. Bea worked endlessly in doing Good for the Order not only for the local lodge of the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, but she dedicated her time and energy to our State organization holding multiple positions with both.

She was instrumental in and involved in OSDIA State “outreach weekends” and Biennial conventions and mentoring me along the way working with her in planning onsite/offsite fun outings for Verdi members, being involved in the Italian Festivals, St. Joseph’s Italian festivals, Fashion shows, casino trips, Colonial Downs horse racing events, Trip to Greenbrier Resort, Dinner/dances at Verdi, our 100th Anniversary, WOW! Wasn’t that fantastic!! Halloween parties (and oh how she loved Halloween) her home amazingly decorated for everyone, children and adults to enjoy spooky music to head in glass globes!! BEWARE!!

A few other events, the Class of Life-a One Man show at Verdi lodge. Our wonderful New Year’s Eve event at Founders Inn from some years being 6 or 8 of us to 18/20 of Italians together. Laughing, dancing, enjoying beverages together sharing Italian family memories, figuring out how officially being related to each other and also related in heart with each other. And taking her turn in preparing monthly meeting meals.

All of these took time and planning and Bea never faltered.

Bea tirelessly (or maybe tired) worked on fundraisers to help support our charities and our building and grounds making them all memorable. Our most successful one, Virginia Diner Peanuts. But All in ALL, Bea loved doing it. The list could go on!!

Although her heart and soul were with Giuseppe Verdi Lodge, Bea was also involved in other Italian organizations, SOCIETA (An Italian business organization), IACA (Italian American Cultural Association), Catholic Women’s group and dedicated to the Comboni Sisters in our area.

Now you have heard me say a few times in this message that Bea loved... She truly did, but most importantly she was LOVED, by many. In just two short years Bea has joined her beloved husband, Junny, and I pray that for many years to come they will always be Angels Among Us, watching over us, whispering in our ears, helping us to carry on here at Verdi Lodge who and what they have left behind, their family, their friends, their dedication to their Italian Heritage. Yes, they are both no longer physically with us but in my heart forever.

I, along with others will deeply miss her as we do Junny. *Ti Amo, my dear friends!*

May your new life be a wonderful journey!”

Italian Heritage Lodge #2517

January 2026 – April 2026

(Submitted by Coletta Sciscilo)

Like most of our local lodges, IHL was forced to cancel, postpone, or reduce some winter events due to the weather and dangerous driving and walking conditions that froze our area and prevented our members from meeting. Ah, well, we are into Spring and all is well. Here are the activities for which we did meet and in which we participated.

January 4, 2026 – New Year's Brunch

We gathered for our annual brunch to celebrate ringing in the New Year with our Italian friends and IHL members.



February 8, 2026

A few of us attended early breakfast at the farm-to-table **Silver Diner** in Fairfax before heading over to the theatre to view “Solo Mio”. A fun movie!

February 21, 2026

A field trip to the famous Mercato Italiano “A Litteri” in Washington, DC is always a fun place to shop and pick up Italian foods, wines, pastas, and more!

February 21, 2026

The weather did not interfere with our February Italian Language Group, “Cena e Conversazione”, members from gathering this month. Our coordinator noted that *“It was good to fare due chiacchiere over such a delicious meal.”*

February 28, 2026 – Election of Offices & Trustees And Presentation of the Coins of Venice

We welcomed back our friend Mike Markowitz who gave us another Power Point presentation, the subject this time was the “Coinage of Venice.” It was another interesting event with Mike that also included Venetian inspired foods for dinner.



March 8, 2026 – Soup, Sandwiches & A Movie: Marriage Italian Style

One event we were forced to reschedule was our annual “Soup, Sandwiches & A Movie” as Lodge members and friends were treated to a delicious lunch of two soups - “Seafood Stew” prepared by Steve Kramer and “Lasagna Soup” prepared by Dawn Falsinotti - along with a nice assortment of sandwiches. Afterwards we gathered and watched “Marriage Italian Style”, the 1964 romantic comedy starring Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni.

March 22, 2026 – IHL Installation Ceremony



In the group photo, from left to right, in the front row, they are:

Guard Dennis Lillo, Treasurer John Dovel, Financial Secretary Steven Kramer, Recording Secretary Joseph Scafetta Jr., Immediate Past President Dawn Falsinotti, Vice President James Cocco, and President Michael Gering.

In the back row, from left to right, they are:

Master of Ceremonies Roy Schender, Mistress of Ceremonies Sandra Schender, Trustee Alex Genovese, Trustee Charles Santangelo, Trustee Coletta Sciscilo, Trustee Angelo Saladini Jr., and Trustee Eleanor Lillo.



State President Aldo Funai congratulates newly installed IHL President Mike Gering (left) and Vice President Jim Cocco (right)

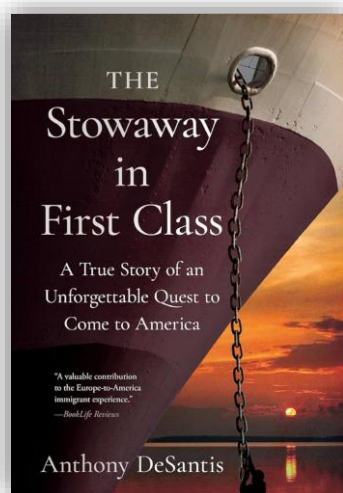


Newly installed IHL President Mike Gering presented Immediate Past President Dawn Falsinotti with an award for her dedication, devotion, outstanding efforts, and lengthy time served as IHL President from 2019 to 2026

April 18, 2026 – “The Stowaway in First Class”

Anthony DeSantis
“The Stowaway in First Class”

Author Anthony DeSantis presented his book and a soon-to-be movie, “The Stowaway in First Class”, with a behind-the-scenes journey of bringing a family legacy from print to film. Tony also highlighted his passion for his heritage and his father’s immigration story as the ‘stowaway’ main character of the book. Tony shared with our members his excitement of his story about immigration, Italian heritage, the importance of knowing your family’s history and the encouragement to record them.



I would like to acknowledge those who assisted and advised me, contributed articles, pictures and ideas for this quarterly *il Giornale*:

Beverly Amante, Dawn Falsinotti, Aldo Funai Jr., Virginia Hudert, Steven Kramer, Eleanor Lillo, Joseph Scafetta Jr., Marie M. Siebeking and Mary Louise Smith.

Mostly, I am grateful for the support of *i miei amici italiani!* ~ c.s.

Virginia Nuara Hudert is a member of Giuseppe Verdi Lodge.

Ciao Virginia. It is nice that you can join me in this conversation. You and I have been communicating about a fun project that, to me, seemed to mean a lot to you. I have a small intimate connection to your project which I will explain.

My daughter-in-law, Tess, received a Christmas present from her son, Joe, in 2024. They were heirloom Calabrian pepper seeds from Calabria, Italy. She began their germination indoors and cultivated them until they were ready to be planted. I purchased several of them from her, since she knew her family of young children could not consume all the spicy peppers that would be harvested from 9 seedlings. I then gave them away at our GLVA convention held in the spring of 2025, potted along with some quite healthy basil and Italian parsley. Virginia gladly returned home from the convention with one of the plants and repotted it on her deck top garden.



Over the coming months, Virginia and I communicated quite frequently about the progress of these peppers, sharing pictures, emails and texts, questions, and finally recipes. We sometimes veered off into other topics, like growing up Italian, our children, and especially our grandfathers and what they taught us about gardening and fig trees.

Virginia, tell us about your Sicilian grandparents and father, the hometowns from where they immigrated. When did they come to the United States and where did they settle?

My grandfather, Bernado LaMarca, was born in Partanna, Sicilia, Province of Trapani. He had been in the Italian Cavalry. He came to the United States in the early 1900's. Evidently, he didn't like New York, so he went to Akron, Ohio. My grandmother, Luigia Russo, came to the United States in January 1907 with 2 daughters. My mother, Mary LaMarca, was born December 6, 1907.

My father, Calogero Nuara – he took the name Carl, was born in Casteltermini, Sicilia, Province of Agrigento. He served in the Italian Army during WWI as a telegraph operator during the war and worked in the post office after the war. He was also a teacher. He came to Richmond, Virginia in 1923 and since he could not speak English, he couldn't do any of those things. He became a barber and owned his own barber and beauty shops. Neither of his parents came to the United States. He met and married my mom, Mary LaMarca, in 1940.

You speak so tenderly of your grandfather, as I do of mine, and I wonder what you learned from him. You even imparted some information to me on transplanting my fig tree, which you learned from him.

My grandfather Bernardo, my mother's father, lived with us when I was young. As far as I can tell, my grandfather did not have any particular trade. I think he was just a man who knew how to plant vegetables and take care of chickens and rabbits like all the other people of his time in his village of Partanna. I am sure everyone had a plot in their yard where they grew crops that grew in their part of the world for the family and small animals for the family's table.

Our backyard had rose bushes and other flowers and was full of fruit trees - lots of fig trees especially. There was a big garden for vegetables and during the Second World War my grandfather had chickens and rabbits. This was a necessity at the time, so my grandfather did what he probably did in Sicily. I don't remember the chickens, but my brother and I would help with the rabbits when my grandfather went back to Akron to visit his son for the summer. It was like a beautiful paradise. My brother and I were so lucky. We couldn't have asked for a more perfect childhood. Of course, we didn't realize it at the time.

As for the fig trees, there were many. We had what they called white figs (green on the outside and red inside) and brown figs. My father would come home for lunch and go into the back yard and pick the figs for us to eat. His barber shop was next door to our house and of course, my mom was always home.

I learned some gardening from my grandfather, but I also learned about making sauce with finocchio and pasta with vegetables. Unfortunately, he died when I was 14 and I wasn't mature enough to have asked him questions about his life in Sicily, or how he felt during the War since Italy was the enemy. He had been in the Italian Cavalry. Since he didn't speak English and I didn't speak Italian, we could not get involved in long conversations.

I learned Italian culture and some cooking from my mom. Honestly, she was such a great cook, I was not needed in the kitchen. When my father came from Sicily, he endured such prejudice that my brother and I were told to only speak English. My mother spoke Italian, my father spoke Italian and of course, my grandfather only spoke Italian. My brother and I could understand Italian and my grandfather would teach us Italian words when my father was at work.



Clearly, his joy, his lessons, have lasted your lifetime when I see all you are growing, and most of all the pleasure you received each day when you saw the little signs of growth and progress in your garden.



Over the summer months, I sensed your frustration at how long the Calabrian peppers were taking to first blossom then grow. I saw and heard your joy, though, in finally seeing peppers appear, first green, but then ripening to a glorious red by the end of the summer. We shared some recipes and suggestions for the spicy peppers. How did those work, and did you enjoy eating them? What was your favorite meal or way to use them?

I enjoy gardening first because it reminds me of my childhood days growing up with my parents, my brother and my grandfather. It is always a wonder when I see little plants grow into bigger plants and some produce food that I can eat and enjoy. I live in a townhouse and all I have is the back deck, where I grow things in pots. The deck receives sun about 5-6 hours a day, so I do have some luck with herbs, cherry tomatoes and sometimes a pepper or two. That's why I had such a great time growing the Calabrian pepper plant last year.

Yes, I was a little frustrated since I didn't know what and when to expect things. Thanks to your tutoring, I finally got some peppers. I gave a few away to my granddaughter - a great cook - and my son-in law, who likes "hot" foods. I used them in salads and cooked them with zucchini and other vegetables.



Will you be this adventurous again this year? I believe your Calabrian pepper project was a complete success since you harvested around 12 peppers from one plant.



This year's garden is going very slowly. It took so long for the temperature to get warmer and now, with all the rain - don't get me wrong, we need the rain - I can't get out there and get things started. So far, I have planted leafy greens, arugula, two yellow peppers, two plum tomatoes, and some herbs. I lost several of the herbs this past winter, so I am starting from scratch. I saved some Calabrian pepper seeds from last year, but so far none have germinated. I seem to do better with plants.

Virginia, thank you for sharing your memories with us. My feeling during your efforts was that it was much more about being connected to your Sicilian ancestry, the memories of your grandfather, and how memories of our youth remain with us forever. These memories connect us to our childhood experiences, our family's lingering influences, and perhaps a desire to hold on to them to proudly show and teach to our children and grandchildren.

C.S.