

**Italian Heritage and
Culture Committee of
NY, Inc.**

For Immediate Release

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*2026: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of N.Y. Inc
and the Italian and Italian American Contribution to America for 250 years*

Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of New York, Inc. (IHCC-NY) proudly announces its historical milestone: 50 years of promoting Italian heritage, culture, and language. Joseph Sciaime, President/Chair of the IHCC-NY for the past 20 years and inaugural member of the 1976 founding committee, commented on this special 50th year anniversary celebration. "I and the IHCC-NY Board of Directors can take pride that for over five decades we have brought to the American public, as well as the international scene, the achievements of many Italian and Italian Americans through our thematic celebrations, posters, bookmarks, brochures, annual commemorative booklet and its Tri-State Program Calendar. In our ceremonies, events, and student essay contest, we have evidenced the outstanding historic achievements of many Italians and Italian Americans, of those who migrated to the Americas and throughout the world, highlighting their creativity and intelligence in so many fields."

In keeping with the celebration theme, on July 1, 2026, the IHCC-NY's singular, annual Leonardo Da Vinci award will be presented posthumously to the Italian immigrant sculptor Luigi Del Bianco, the chief stone carver of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, depicting the majestic figures of Washington, Jefferson, T. Roosevelt, and Lincoln, in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Lou Del Bianco, Luigi's grandson, author, actor, and musician, will be accepting the award.

It all began in the spring of 1976 as Italian Culture Week, May 17-23, under the auspices of the New York City Board of Education, as a citywide initiative to promote the study of Italian language in public schools. Leo Bernardo, Director of the New York City Bureau of Foreign Languages, Steven Aiello, President of the Board of Education, and Rosamarie Riccio Pietanza, President of the New York Italian Teachers Association, agreed that an Italian Culture Week would highlight the importance of the Italian language. Dr. Angelo Gimondo, Director of Bilingual Education, became its first chairman, and later president, until December 2006. Ms. Pietanza, became its first program coordinator. The first poster was designed by an Italian language student. Mayor Abraham Beame, presented the first Proclamation at City Hall as he recognized the small group of educators and administrators, who were instrumental in making the initial proposal a reality. That event was followed by a reception at the Italian Consulate.

In 1985, the celebrations moved to October, to coincide with Columbus Day events, becoming Italian Heritage and Culture Month. The annual Proclamations expanded to include those of the Borough Presidents, City Council, New York City Mayor, New York Governor, and the President of the United States in recognition of the contribution of Italians and Italian Americans.

The IHCC-NY Board continues to be comprised of eminent representatives of New York's Italian and Italian American community, some of whom were there in 1976. The IHCC-NY ever expands its scope, collaborating with the Italian Consulate in New York, the Italian Cultural Institute in New York, Columbus Citizen's Foundation, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Italian American Teacher's Association, Italian American Committee on Education, NIAF, the Italian American Museum, among others. Other states began to mirror IHCC-NY's example.

What a significant contribution to promoting, presenting, and preserving Italian heritage, culture, and language. What a significant contribution to American culture and history. What a legacy!

1976: IHCC-NY, Inc. began during the Bicentennial Celebrations of America's Independence. 2026: Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of New York's celebrates its Golden Jubilee, coinciding with the 250th Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America.

Buon Anniversario!