

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Another New York State Convention has come and gone and while I have always enjoyed our conventions, I believe this was one of the nicest. The ambiance at the Desmond Hotel made us feel as though we were in a perennial garden and the unassigned seating gave us all the opportunity to meet and speak with members from lodges throughout the state.

On a personal note, I thank all involved for naming me as one of the recipients of the very prestigious Dr. Vincent Sellaro Award. It certainly was my highlight of this wonderful convention. As a 30-year member of the Order, I found an extended family of brothers and sisters, and many good friends. My dedication to the Order over the years, was a truly a labor of love for a very worthy cause.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers, members and friends who contributed to the CSJ at the Convention. Your contributions are instrumental in assisting the CSJ to fight bias and bigotry against Italian-Americans and promote our positive image.

It was a pleasure to meet the many members that visited our CSJ Table. Our positive image material is available for distribution to schools, libraries, lodge buildings or wherever it can be utilized and appreciated. I particularly thank Carmel Lamont for the many hours she spent manning the table.

Our liaisons are instrumental to keeping the CSJ viable and our lodges informed on our various programs. We welcome Joseph DiCarlo, from the Gabriele D'Annunzio Lodge # 321 and Anna Maria Saia, from the Roma Intangible Lodge # 215, both in District 6, as liaisons – they are much needed in this District. We look forward to working with them.

We certainly welcome all the emails and telephone calls from members and their friends, when they become incensed over occurrences that are offensive to Italian Americans. The latest occurred on Sunday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008, during NBC's nationally aired coverage of the U.S. Open, featuring Tiger Woods and Rocco Mediate. Sportscaster Johnny Miller made derogatory remarks concerning Rocco Mediate by stating, "*Mediate looks like the guy who cleans Tiger's swimming pool,*" and "*Guys with the name of Rocco don't get on the trophy, do they?*" To quote the NY Times, according to Miller, "An Italian guy who looks like a pool cleaner, with his name on a trophy with Tiger's, sounded wrong." Not only was his verbal diatribe aired on national television but was reproduced via a film clip on the internet, and printed in the New York Times and other newspapers. We wrote to Richard Ebersole, President -NBC Sports, concerning these derogatory remarks on national television, asking that Mr. Miller be removed from his sensitive position. Our National CSJ President, Anthony Baratta, conducted a national campaign to this endeavor. A very half- hearted apology was published by Mr. Miller, which is not acceptable to us. We have not given up on this matter.

We also heard from many irate members concerning a symposium held at Fordham University, Lincoln Center Campus, "The Soprano's – A Wake," which was held on the weekend of May 24<sup>th</sup>. It consisted of a series of lectures, conducted by professors, adjuncts and lecturers from all over the world, who seemed to have found some redeeming value to this series. This symposium was supposed to be a sociological study comparing the *Soprano's* family/characters to any other American family and their friends. We did write to the President of Fordham, concerning the use of this prestigious University for this symposium. We did receive a letter of apology – with the notation that the University did not advertise or promote the symposium and would not offer their facilities for anything like it in the future.

Our 27<sup>th</sup> annual breakfast held jointly with B'Nai B'Rith Metronorth Region, held on June 1, 2008 at the Woodlands. Lehman Laguardia Awards were presented to Howard Meier, Chairman Holocaust Memorial

and Tolerance Center of Nassau County and Dr. Margaret Cuomo Meier, a medical professional, educator involved in the promotion of Italian Language Studies. Former Governor Mario Cuomo and his lovely wife, Mathilda Cuomo were in attendance as we honored their family for all their good works. There was an atmosphere of shared camaraderie and acknowledgment of our similar causes, to fight bias and bigotry. I thank Marge Moschella, Sal Moschella, Enrico Annichiarico, Richard Haemmerle, Eleanor Jobbagy and Maria Kobylarz, for a job well done.

Last year, we were instrumental in enabling an Italian Language program to be introduced at St. Finbar's Elementary School in Brooklyn, NY, as part of the curriculum for grades K through 8. Unfortunately the Diocese of Brooklyn chose to close St. Finbar's this June. Most of the students transferred to nearby Our Lady of Guadalupe School. At a meeting with their principal, Ms. Diana Meringolo, she is enthusiastic about absorbing the entire Italian Language program into that school, as part of the curriculum, depending on a grant from IACE, for teacher's salaries. If the grant received does not cover salaries for teachers of all grades, the program will continue for the lower grades only. Because OLG has twice the number of students as St. Finbar's, they will be requiring additional books for the program. We will be working with the school to assist in obtaining the additional books.

Kudos to Josephine Konow, a member of the Columbia County Lodge # 659, who was instrumental in introducing an Italian Language Program, as part of the curriculum at the Academy of Christian Leadership in Columbia County. She has also set up Italian Language programs in three private schools. We were happy to provide her with our positive image material as teaching aids. Her enthusiasm is certainly exciting and very productive.

Our next exciting event is our "Day at the Races" at Belmont Park – Saturday, September 13, 2008. This is a District I, II, III Fund Raiser and promises to be a great afternoon. The cost is \$42. per person and includes a buffet lunch. Contact Tony Corsello, ASAP for reservations – 516-766-5518.

**If you see something – say something!** When you notify us about an incident, please also provide us with the TV or radio station; date and time of the program; the name of the publication, date of issue; and as much information as possible so that we can properly respond to the matter. We try to address every issue.

Remember – *If you are a member of OSIA you are a member of CSJ!*