

I Mission of the Commission for Social Justice

The purpose of the Commission for Social Justice (CSJ) is to insure equal concern, respect, treatment, and opportunity for all Italians, Italian Americans and those of other ethnic origins by appropriate and lawful purposes. It strives to advance understanding among all people through educational endeavors and makes every effort to preserve and translate into greater effectiveness, the principles of liberty, equality and justice,

To actualize its mission, the CSJ works to aid, assist, foster, promote and advance good will and proper understanding among Americans, preserve and translate into greater effectiveness, the ideals of American Democracy, eliminate bias, bigotry and prejudice and counteract un-American and anti-democratic activities through broad educational programs.

The goals of the CSJ are effectuated through its Complaint Directory and by various proactive programs and projects to include: the Medal of Honor Program, the film documentary, "Italian American Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor", the Holocaust Memorial Program, Italian language and culture initiatives, positive image materials, speaking engagements, and the publication of our newspaper, *Justice*. Of course, the retention and support of our CSJ members is always a priority.

II Changes in District CSJ Administration

Josephine Truglio, CSJ Vice Chairperson, is currently managing some medical issues and has resigned from her position as District III CSJ Chair. However, she will continue in her position on the CSJ Executive Board. We express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Josephine for her dedication and outstanding service to District III. We pray for her sound recovery and her return to the Executive Board.

Anthony Corsello, Past President of the Per Sempre Lodge #2344, has agreed to accept the position of District III CSJ Chairperson. Anthony has been an active member of the CSJ Executive Board since 2003. His background, experience and commitment to the CSJ will serve him well in his position as the District III Chair. We ask our District III Lodges to encourage their liaisons to regularly attend the District III CSJ meetings to support Anthony's efforts to develop CSJ's service to the District.

We are pleased to announce that Dr. John Bosso, M.D., Trustee in the Rockland Lodge #2176, has accepted the position of District V CSJ Chairperson. Dr. Bosso is the CSJ Chair for the Rockland Lodge and he has always shown a strong interest in the work of the CSJ. We are fortunate to have a person with his dedication, commitment and professional background to serve as the District V CSJ Chairperson.

III Italian Language Program

The current state of the economy has significantly impacted foreign language programs across the State. We have heard from concerned parents and teachers from a number of school districts who indicated that Italian classes in their schools are either in danger of being cut or have been terminated.

This problem underscores the need to promote Italian language after school programs for students in the exit grades of elementary school. After school programs help to maintain and create interest in learning Italian in school districts that have cut the program or have never taught Italian. They also serve to nurture and support Italian language study in districts that have active programs by developing a reserve of students ready to enroll in Italian classes when they enter Junior High School.

The CSJ has researched and continues to evaluate after school programs to fit the needs of filial lodges that are interested in getting an Italian language program in their local school districts or in supporting an existing program. In addition, CSJ will continue to support Italian programs at all grade levels by supplying teachers of Italian with educational and positive image materials to enhance their classroom instruction and to complement the atmosphere of “Italianita” that typically enriches their classrooms.

IV Positive Image

The CSJ is currently updating its positive image materials and is always developing new ideas to portray Italians and Italian Americans in their very best light. We are now also gearing some of our educational materials for elementary school children. Jean Gagliardo has developed child friendly bookmarks of Italian Explorers and is working on posters that are visually appealing and intelligible to young children. The bookmarks were distributed to teachers at the 2010 CSJ/AATI Breakfast at Hofstra. A new Christopher Columbus poster was introduced at the NYS OSIA Convention in June.

The CSJ is designing a poster depicting the recipients of the NYS Literary Award in Memory of Pietro Di Donato and John Fante. The suggestion was made by author and playwright, Richard Vetere who received the NYS Literary Award at the NYS OSIA Convention this past June. He said that he would be proud to use the poster in his own classroom at Queens College to feature Italian American writers. In his words of acceptance at Convention, Richard stated that the Order Sons of Italy in America is the only Italian American organization that has recognized him for his achievements.

Leo Cimini is in charge of developing the new poster. He is now reviewing photos and bios of past recipients for the layout.

The CSJ continually distributes educational and positive image materials to educators, filial lodges and members. We encourage our Lodges to also distribute these materials to their local libraries, schools and at community events.

V Medal of Honor Program

The CSJ's Medal of Honor Program continues to be a popular exhibit among a variety of audiences. Of course it is especially well received by military groups, at Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, and at other public events to honor our military and veterans. CSJ distributes the Medal of Honor video documentary to lodges, State CSJ's, military groups, and other interested parties around the country.

On March 25th, the exhibit was prominently displayed at the Long Beach City Hall to celebrate National Medal of Honor Day. This ceremony was held in conjunction with the renaming of the Long Beach Bridge to the Michael Valenti Bridge in honor of Army Cpl. Michael Valenti who received the Medal of Honor in World War I for his heroic action in the battle against the Hindenburg Line.

This November, the Medal of Honor Exhibit will be displayed at the Northport Veterans' Hospital Nursing Home at the Northport Veterans' Hospital at the request of the Northport Veterans' Administration. More information will follow.

The CSJ encourages Lodges to take advantage of every opportunity to present this program in their communities. Also, it is suggested that lodges show the Medal of Honor 6-minute promo videotape in conjunction with this exhibit. CSJ will be happy to provide information on how to set up and present the program to help insure that it is professionally and reverently displayed to honor our Italian American war heroes.

VI Tribute to a Brave Soldier

The Parents of Army Pfc. Steven B. Riccione, from Geneva, NY have been trying to secure the Medal of Honor for their son for the past 25 years. Pfc. Steven Riccione was killed in action in the Quang Tin Province of South Vietnam on September 27, 1967 while trying to evacuate wounded soldiers during a battle with the North Vietnamese. While trying to protect a wounded soldier, Pfc. Riccione grabbed a machine gun when his own weapon was disabled by a bullet. He attacked an enemy bunker killing two enemy soldiers who were directing fire against him and other members of his company. He then got the wounded soldier to safety. Sadly, Steven was killed a short time later during the evacuation.

Both parents of Pfc. Riccione have passed away. Steven's father was a long time member and Past President of the Geneva Lodge #2397. However, Steven's siblings have taken up the cause on their brother's behalf. Over the years, the Riccione family's efforts have been thwarted by missing military records and changes in Congressmen who had been working with them.

The City Council of Geneva has approved motions urging Congressmen and the Department of the Army to move forward with the request to secure the Medal of Honor for Pfc. Riccione. The Geneva Lodge also is strongly behind the initiative. Recently, Anthony Di Costanzo, Past President of the Geneva Lodge, sent CSJ an E-mail advising that US Congressman Richard Hanna has made a proposal to the Legislature to name the Geneva US Post Office after Pfc. Steven B. Riccione.

Enrico Annichiarico, CSJ Chairman, sent a letter to US Congressman Hanna applauding his proposal. He also expressed CSJ's appreciation to the Congressman for his leadership in cooperation with the Geneva City Council, the Geneva Lodge and the Family of Steven Riccione, toward the effort to have Steven awarded the Medal of Honor. We extend our thanks to Anthony Di Costanzo for bringing this information to our attention.

VII Holocaust Memorial Program

Vincent Marmorale, Chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Committee, has been busy speaking before various groups and organizations. He is also working with Elizabeth Bettina, author of It Happened in Italy, to gather further documentation on how the Italian people saved thousands of Jews from Nazi internment during World War II.

Vincent and Bettina have completed a short pilot of their documentary on the subject, which was shown at the Queensborough College Holocaust Memorial Center on April 3, 2011. They are currently in the process of seeking potential sponsors for this project.

On another note, we have received an invitation from Mr. Kurt Goldberger, President of the Kindertransport Association Inc. (KTA) and member of B'nai B'rith Metro North. Mr. Goldberger has invited members of the Order to visit the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County to view their KTA exhibit.

The exhibit depicts events that took place between the Kristallnacht Nazi raids in the Jewish ghetto on November 9-10, 1938, and the start of World War II. During that period, 10,000 Jewish children were sent without their parents out of Nazi Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia to safety in Great Britain through the courageous Kindertransport Rescue Movement.

The Center is open on weekdays from 9:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and on weekends from 12:00 to 4:00 P.M. It is located 100 Crescent Beach Road, Glen Cove, N.Y. For information, call the Center at 516-571-8040.

Marcia Posner, Librarian at the Center also announced that the Center is planning an Italian program featuring Italian authors on Sunday, October 23, 2011. Mrs. Posner has asked to meet with a few members of the CSJ to discuss some ideas for the program. More information will follow.

VIII CSJ Districts

The CSJ has been in contact with the Chairpersons in all eight Districts. We have been impressed with the programs and positive image activities that take place throughout the State. We also have sent out letters to all Lodge Presidents requesting the name and contact information of their CSJ liaisons and asking that they appoint a CSJ Liaison if they have not already done so.

District I – Enrico Annichiarico, State CSJ Chair, will be appointing a new District I CSJ Chair at his district meeting on July 27th.

District II – Lee Cerullo presented the 2010 Bella Lingua Awards on June 16, 2011. Also that evening, District II CSJ presented a special recognition award to Mary Abby and Jean Gagliardo for their dedication and tireless efforts on behalf of District II CSJ.

District III – Anthony Corsello, the new District III Chair, is in the process of organizing the District. He is contacting lodge Presidents and CSJ Liaisons to build attendance and support to advance the goals of CSJ in District III.

District IV – John Carriero, was successful in having a Porsche ad that stated, “This is why Italians should stick to making gelato,” removed from an automotive magazine. Bravo John!

District V – John Bosso, the new District V CSJ Chair, reported organizing a well attended trip for the Rockland Lodge #2176 to an East Village Theater for the screening of the film, *Bonafacci: in Search of the Truth*, starring actor, Paul Borghese, who is a member of the Rockland Lodge.

District VI – Joseph De Carlo worked the cultural tent at the St. Anthony’s Feast and did a cooking demonstration along with Delores Scalese.

District VII – Carmine and Joseph Federico held a performance of “The Italian Choraliers” at the St. Anthony’s Festival in Cortland , NY to honor our Italian Heritage.

District VIII – Jennifer Rube’ highlighted Italian Heritage and Culture at the Festa Italiana in Rochester, NY. on the weekend of July 15-17.

Mille Grazie! to all our District Chairs and Liaisons for promoting our proud Heritage. Keep up the good work.

IX Complaint Directory

This section contains one of the most important aspects of our work – writing letters to those who defame Italians and Italian Americans. It is an ongoing challenge to monitor the various forms of the media for content that is offensive to Italian Americans.

Fortunately, we do receive some assistance with our vigilance by members who contact us when they see or hear something defamatory and bring it to our attention. We appreciate their cooperation and we try to respond as promptly as possible to the information that we receive.

This process is made easier when we have sufficient details on the matter. It is therefore important that we are provided with information such as the name of the TV program and the date and time of the program, or the name and issue of the newspaper or magazine, and any other details that can help us respond appropriately to the matter.

- **Katwalk** – A popular Manhattan restaurant served specially priced drinks on Tuesday nights that had names such as Mobster Martinis, Godfather Champagne, Soprano Shot, etc. and suggested to patrons that they make the bartender an offer that he can’t refuse. The room is surrounded by TV screens playing classic Mafia movies. Stella Grillo wrote a letter of complaint to the management. The establishment did not respond but, apparently, the owner got the message and discontinued the Tuesday night Mafia theme. Well done Stella!

- **Battery Park City Authority (BPCA)** – Recently John Fratta submitted a Freedom of Information Request to the BPCA asking for information explaining how they arrived at the decision to rent a space on Pier A to restaurateur, Peter Poulakakos, without first going to the local Community Board and the community at large. Other bidders for Pier A space included Joseph Grano Jr. who proposed installing a museum of Italian Heritage but received no response from the BPCA. Stella Grillo had sent a letter of support for the Community Board’s position to the BPCA and Governor Andrew Cuomo. In her letter, Stella asserted that the property be donated for the purpose creating an Italian American Museum since there is a Jewish Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Irish Hunger Memorial already in place at Battery Park. John Fratta reports that he has received some documents from the BPCA but not sufficient to justify their decision. The Community Board and local supporters are considering retaining Legal Council at this time.

X College Liaisons

Sal La Lima has sent letters to Long Island Colleges reminding them that October is Italian Heritage Month and he has offered CSJ assistance in promoting the month. Also, He and Lou Gallo have been working with Suffolk Community College to develop the idea of holding an Italian Cultural Event on campus sometime next summer.

Sal La Gumina, in addition to his literary work, is busy with the planning of Nassau Community College’s annual Italian Culture Program in October. More information will follow.

XI Public Relations

CSJ is working to develop publicity and public relations ideas to promote its positive programs and activities. A concerted effort is underway to develop a cooperative publicity network with all the Districts. Also, some possibilities for publicity in major newspapers are being pursued.

XII CSJ Website

The CSJ website can be accessed at www.nyscsj.org. To assist our members who have information to share with us, our Webmaster, Terry Tanzer, installed a complaint form that can be filled out on-line with instructions on how to forward it for review. Terry also has installed music for your listening pleasure. We are discussing several other program possibilities. We thank Terry for bringing CSJ into the new generation of technology.

XIII Videotape Library

Our videotape library has been removed from the Garibaldi Museum and the tapes are being examined for visual quality by our board members. CSJ also will be reviewing new material on DVD format to replace damaged and films that are no longer accessible. Hopefully, we will be lending out tapes and DVD’s again in the very near future.

Special Thanks

On behalf of the CSJ Executive Board, I extend our appreciation to Salvatore Moschella for his patience, cooperation and helpful suggestions in the preparation and printing of *Justice*. Besides his service to the CSJ as the Editor of the Golden Lion, Sal also has contributed creative ideas and has applied his printing savvy to help develop and produce some of our positive image materials. And thanks to Marge Moschella for assisting Sal in the publication of *Justice* and for her help with CSJ mailings and some of the other details that must be attended to in order to get the job done.

Special acknowledgement must go to the members of the CSJ travelers club: Josephine Morici Cohen, Sal La Lima and Lou Gallo. Sal and Lou travel from Shoreham and Rocky Point, pick up Josephine in Middle Island, and drive to New Hyde Park to attend the CSJ Council Meetings. Thanks to all of you for your dedication.

We are fortunate to have two diligent and meticulous financial officers to manage our fiscal matters. Thank you to our Financial Secretary, Richard Haemmerle and Treasurer, Eleanor Jobaggy for your dutiful care of our finances.

It is always comforting to know that our CSJ gatherings and events will be immortalized by the skillful hand of Natale “one more” Mannino. We can always depend on Nat to find the right moment, the right light and the right pose to turn a moment in time into a lasting memento.

Speaking of mementos, thank you Maria Kobylarz, our Recording Secretary, for recording the the minutes of the CSJ Executive Committee meetings and getting them out on time.

Thank you to Carol Di Trapani and Eileen Stavis at the Grand Lodge office for mailing out the CSJ minutes and other correspondence and for their cooperation in resolving occasional matters of concern that pop up unexpectedly now and then.

NYS Commission for Social Justice Calendar of Events

September 17, 2011 – Day at the Races at Belmont Park sponsored by District I, District II and District III. Contact Leo Cimini, Chairperson, for information.

September 18, 2011 – CSJ/AATI Breakfast at Hofstra University. More information will follow.

NYS COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Commission for Social Justice

Order Sons of Italy in America

**Plenary Session Report
July 23, 2011**

**Andrea Doria Lodge#2201
V.F.W. Hall
31 Horseblock Road
Centereach, NY**

