



**Commit to active
participation in
our Dante Club**

DANTE'S INFERNO



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Pat Orelli

New committee to look at member participation

Member participation was a topic of much discussion when the advisory and finance committee and the board of directors met in January. Also discussed was the debt the Dante Club has incurred with the upgrade of its facilities.

As a result, a special committee was appointed to consider ways to improve member participation and develop fundraising activities. Matt Longo will head the committee, which includes Dan Calcagno, Tom Novi and Ron Pane.

The Dante Club has a membership of 255, although not all members had paid their dues as of this writing. Only 77 members attended our January meeting, three of whom had been interviewed for membership that night. I am pleased that all three were

See PRESIDENT'S CORNER, Page 7

WE SWEAR ...



The newly elected Dante Club board of directors for 2024 are sworn in by Ron Fiorica, far right, during the January members meeting. Ready to serve the club are, from left, Matt Longo, George Procida, Rich Battistessa, John Caselli, Dennis Noble, Steve DeCristofaro, Pat Orelli, Ronnie Pane, Jim Dimino, Dan Calcagno, Tom Mezzanares and Bill Maffei.

ENHANCING OUR CULTURE

By Susan Pricco

Italian clubs rooted in immigrant history

Members of the Dante Club perpetuate Italian traditions, culture, food and heritage in a special way.

When my grandparents and great grandparents immigrated to the United States, like many other intrepid Italians they usually chose

areas where friends, relatives or townsfolk had already settled. With new opportunities ahead, it made sense for immigrants to go where others spoke their language, understood their journey and perhaps knew where to find work.

See CULTURE, Page 6



NEWS, NOTES AND OTHERWISE

General manager's report

January 2024 was a great kick-off for the new year, with a wedding and the return of some annual banquets, including the Sacramento Wheelmen's awards dinner and the Dante Club crab feed, which attracted 192 guests.

General manager Jennifer Peretti reminds members that because of an increase in labor and food costs, the Sunday Family Dinner price for adults is now \$18. Children's meals remain at \$8 each.

As of last month, dinner reservations for Sunday and members dinners are due by midnight Fridays rather than Saturdays to ensure that the food and other products can be ordered without delay or issue. Women's Auxiliary reservations are due by midnight Thursdays.

The event center is booking into 2024 and 2025 and will begin to accept reservations for 2026 in March. Members should mark their calendars for the March 16 cioppino feed. Reservations will open soon.

Advisory and finance

The Dante Event Center has been successful in keeping a positive cash flow, but it has slightly less than \$400,000 in secured debt. It came to the attention of the advisory and finance committee that this debt could become a problem in the event of another COVID-like shutdown or if event bookings should slow significantly. This is now a matter that needs serious attention.

On another point, members who didn't pay their dues by Jan. 31 should be prepared to include an additional \$25 with their payment.

Buildings and grounds

The buildings and grounds committee faced very few issues in January. The Dante Club's heating, ventilation and air conditioning company did come out to check and service the heating and air



In the first wedding of the year, newlyweds cut their cake with a Samurai sword.

See NEWS, NOTES AND OTHERWISE, Page 3



UPCOMING EVENTS
Call 916-925-8230 or reserve and pay online at:
danteclub.com/members-event-calendar/

February 4

Sunday Family Dinner

Times: 4 p.m. cocktails, 5 p.m. dinner

Menu: Minestrone soup, baked ziti with meat sauce, seasonal vegetables, rolls with butter, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$18 adults, \$8 children ages 12 and younger

Reservations are now closed.

February 12

Women's Auxiliary Dinner and Meeting

Times: 5 p.m. cocktails, 6 p.m. dinner, followed by meeting

Menu: Italian chopped salad, chicken cacciatore, creamy polenta, seasonal vegetables, focaccia breadsticks, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$22

Reserve by midnight Thursday, February 1.

February 19

Dante Club Members Dinner and Meeting

Times: 6 p.m. cocktails, 7 p.m. dinner, followed by meeting

Menu: House salad, chicken cacciatore, creamy polenta, seasonal vegetables, focaccia breadsticks, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$22

Reserve by midnight Friday, Feb. 9.

March 3

Sunday Family Dinner

Times: 4 p.m. cocktails, 5 p.m. dinner

Menu: Caesar salad, meat lasagna (vegetarian available), seasonal vegetables, rolls with butter, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$18 adults, \$8 children ages 12 and younger

Reserve by midnight Friday, Feb. 23.

March 11

Women's Auxiliary Dinner and Meeting

Times: 5 p.m. cocktails, 6 p.m. dinner, followed by meeting

Menu: Irish flag clementine cucumber salad, braised corned beef, cabbage with roasted carrots, boiled Yukon potatoes, rolls with butter, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$22

Reserve by midnight Friday, March 1.

SAVE DATES: Cioppino feed, March 16; Dante Members Dinner and Meeting, March 18

**News, Notes and Otherwise**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

conditioning units, as well as all refrigeration units and ice machines. The building received a clean bill of health and, as of mid-January, no issues were found.

Touch-up painting continued in late January and will be an ongoing task to keep the building looking fresh and clean.

A few tasks will be added to the schedule as we look toward spring and warmer weather. Sometime in March, we will schedule a group of volunteers to pressure-wash the exterior of the building and clean the windows, as dust and cobwebs build up over time and require cleaning.

Around April 1, we will organize a group to put up the outdoor tent. The Dante Event Center has booked several outdoor events for the coming season, so the area needs to look good.

Our facility is aging and has many little ongoing projects that need attention. Any member with a special skill or who just wants to get involved should consider helping with these projects. It's a great way to meet other members and to help maintain this valuable asset that we all enjoy.

Members who are interested should email George Procida at gprocida@gplandscape.com, and they will be added to the buildings and grounds email list.

Save pull tabs

The Dante Club has always prided itself on providing ways for members to give back to our community.

For the past five years, Ron Cristoni has worked with the Ronald McDonald House pull-tab program, which helps offset the cost of overnight stays for parents with a hospitalized child.

Cristoni reports that our total donations to date are 1,625 pounds, valued at more than \$1,625.

Members are asked to collect pull tabs from their canned pet foods, sodas and, of course, beer.

Dante Club and Ladies Auxiliary members can bring their donations to their meetings.

For more information, contact Ron Cristoni. Members also can review the Ronald McDonald House Center of Northern California at www.rmhcnc.org. Go to "Getting Involved" and scroll to box 5, "Pull Tab Program."

Membership committee

We begin 2024 excited about our growing membership. We now have 237 regular and associate members, plus an additional 21 Lifetime members.



Newly inducted are, from left, Paul Turner, Dan Michelotti and Vince Nocito.

At the January meeting, the club inducted three new members: Paul Turner, a retired teacher living in Lodi; Vince Nocito, owner of a benefits insurance services company and Dan Michelotti, owner of an engineering company and sponsored by Jim DiPinto.

We also interviewed three additional applicants: Matt Bruce,

sponsored by Anthony Kafourous; Vince Mastracco, sponsored by John Caselli; and Paul Ciccarelli, sponsored by Al Manfredi. The membership committee recommended all to the general membership for approval. The three will be inducted this month.

One person remains on the waiting list and two more applications have been received, so the year is starting with a flurry of activity.

Thanks to members for continuing to encourage family and friends to consider becoming part of the Dante Club.

Newsletter advertising

Newsletter coordinator John Caselli, along with the entire Dante Club board, wishes to thank our advertisers. Their support helps defray the costs of publishing the club's monthly *Dante's Inferno*. Prospective advertisers should email Caselli at jac6652@aol.com.

Bocce league

Frank Bartuccio and Nick Canapé are lining up two-man bocce teams for the March 5 tournament. We will have 12 to 14 teams competing for the bocce ball million-dollar prize, pasta fazul.

Prizes will be awarded for three places and maybe a dinner or two. Only Dante members will participate. Lunch will be offered to rollers.

Members are encouraged to get out and support this event. The bocce season will begin in early April. Watch emails for the specific times. All matches for team play

See NEWS, NOTES AND OTHERWISE, Page 6



2024 Committees and Assignments

COMMITTEES

ADVISORY AND FINANCE

Pat Orelli, chairman; Dan Calcagno, vice chairman

Members: Tom Mezzanares, Richard Battistessa, George Procida, Tom Novi, Ron Pane

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

George Procida, chairman; Don Agostinelli, vice chairman

Members: Matt Longo, Tom Mezzanares, Joe Porata, Ron Pane, Bill Maffei

BYLAWS

Ron Fiorica, chairman; Tom Novi, vice chairman

Member: Steve DeCristofaro

MEMBERSHIP AND INVESTIGATIONS

Dan Calcagno, chairman

Members: George Procida, Don Agostinelli, Dennis Noble, Tom Mathews

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING

John Caselli, chairman; Tom Mezzanares, vice chairman

SCHOLARSHIP

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Member: Mark Pedroncelli

SOCIAL

Steve DeCristofaro, chairman; Rich Battistessa, vice chairman

Members: John Caselli, Matt Longo, Joe Porata, Ron Pane, Mark Pedroncelli

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

BOCCE

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Members: Dick Zarzana, John Rizzardo

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Frank Buccola, chairman

Members: Bill Maffei, Rich Battistessa, Frank Bartucco

DINNER PROGRAM

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Member: Don Agostinelli

ENHANCING OUR ITALIAN CULTURE

Ralph DiLibero, chairman

Member: Rich Battistessa

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

• Women's Auxiliary liaison: Tom Novi

• Check-in desk for club events and raffle: John Caselli, chairman; Matt Longo, vice chairman; and new members

• Club apparel: Mark Pedroncelli

• Sergeant-at-arms: Colin Orelli

2024-2025 DANTE CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

- Patrick Orelli, president: pat@apcpagroup.com, 916-369-2327
- Dan Calcagno, first vice president: dcalextra@aol.com, 916-481-8368
- Ron Pane, second vice president: repane@icloud.com, 916-798-0111
- Vacant, secretary:
- Tom Mezzanares, treasurer: tjmezzan@gmail.com, 916-467-7483

DIRECTORS

- Richard Battistessa: drbattistessa@comcast.net, 916-961-4854
- John Caselli: jac6652@aol.com, 916-456-1253
- Steve DeCristofaro: stefanodad@gmail.com, 916-752-3247
- Jim Dimino: jkdimino@sbcglobal.net, 916-956-6691
- Ron Fiorica: rbfiorica@frontiernet.net, 916-687-6406
- Matt Longo: longomb@sbcglobal.net, 916-397-5869
- Bill Maffei: mrmaffei@sbcglobal.net, 916-207-6837
- Dennis Noble: d.noble35@comcast.net, 916-889-6677
- Tom Novi: tomnovi@aol.com, 916-961-6197
- Mark Pedroncelli: pddc@surewest.net, 916-812-6729
- George Procida: gprocida@gplandscape.com, 916-455-4738
- Vacant

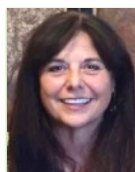


Gift items for baskets sought before month's end

As I was recovering from COVID-19 at home, the board sent me photos of the very festive New Year's table decorations prepared by Anna Tenderella and her team. I would like to thank the board for stepping up to fill in. Vice president Alyse DeFazio conducted the dinner, Kathy Holberton called the tables to the buffet line, and Roseann Jamison called out the raffle numbers. By all accounts, they did a great job!

And, as always, thank you to Susan Kasimatis for providing wonderful appetizers. Our members loved socializing in the bar, enjoying the appetizers and drinking the signature drink of last month—the Venetian Spritz.

Last month the Bingo Sister Duo, Linda Franzioia-Feil and Suzie Franzioia-Rowzeski, ran the game a little differently. No longer a railroad crossing, window frame or blackout—it was just plain old bingo. The games went much



WOMEN'S AUXILIARY NEWS

Debra Cattuzzo

more quickly and had five lucky winners. We may have to make this a regular thing.

Here are January's raffle prize winners: Linda Bottallo, Tahoe House gift basket; Terri Rossi, Boudin gift card; Margaret Lynch, cookie press baking set; Judy Kaminski, Prosecco, glasses and candy in a pewter bowl; Roseann Jamison, free auxiliary dinner; Vera Vaccaro, \$25 cash; Sophia Perrone (guest of Pina Noto), Peet's gift card, Paesano's gift card.

In December, we added four new members to the auxiliary: Tina Marshall, Carletta Puppo, Tiffany Kowalski and Alexandra Ranftl. Welcome, ladies!

Thanks to those who brought in baskets and gifts for the upcoming cioppino feed raffle on March 16. It's the Dante Club's

main fundraiser to pay for all the improvements that have been made in the Dante Event Center.

Remember, any donations are helpful. Members can donate a gift, a basket they've assembled themselves or items that the board can use to make beautiful baskets.

Last year, we were able to make more than 65 baskets containing such items as Italian dinners, wines, movie nights, sports, gardening, pets, pizza, baking, toys, coffee, chocolates and sports. We even had a unicorn basket. Anything is welcome!

We would like gift items before the end of February so we have time to compile them into baskets.

Former Dante Club president Rich Battistessa said he appreciated all the help the auxiliary gave the club last year, so he will be looking again for volunteers—auxiliary members willing to chop vegetables in the

See WOMEN'S AUXILIARY, Page 9

2024 WOMEN'S AUXILIARY BOARD

- | | | |
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| • Debra Cattuzzo, president:
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**Culture**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In my family, I know of communities in Michigan, Colorado, New York, Montana and, of course, California, where Italians congregated. The men usually came first, looking for work and a new life. I know from my own family stories that many found work in mining, farming or ranching. They may have been a little homesick and lonely, as many were bachelors,

so they began making new friendships by regularly spending their free time with small groups of other Italian men.

The feeling of kinship among them helped them cope and thrive in a new country. The groups eventually led to the creation of Italian clubs.

After a time, women came from Italy and joined their husbands or betrothed. Other family members also immigrated to pursue new adventures. Families grew.

The Italian clubs became a respite for the hard-working laborers who needed encouragement and friendship. As time passed, clubs were given Italian names and grew into the organizations of today.

Women's clubs, or auxiliaries attached to the men's clubs, expanded the clubs' reach even further. Each one had unique habits and activities—playing cards and bocce, trading stories over a glass of wine, enjoying family dinners

featuring familiar dishes, singing Italian songs—but all Italian clubs morphed from these humble beginnings.

So when Italian Americans attend or join the Dante Club or Dante Women's Auxiliary, they continue the oral history with words of friendship and shared experiences in a similar fashion as that begun by their immigrant Italian ancestors.

See related story about Italian groups on Page 7.

News, Notes and Otherwise

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

are on Saturdays.

Existing teams are recruiting new players, and the formation of new teams is also encouraged.

Great game, great paesani. Join in and meet new members.

National participation

The board approved Dante Club membership in the national Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations.

Established in 2016 in New York, the group represents more than 60 Italian American organizations nationwide, including the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club and the Sacramento Italian Cultural Society.

The mission of the conference is to advocate for the interests of Italian Americans through various educational and political channels.

Thanks go to Ralph DeLibero for sponsoring the Dante Club's participation in the organization.

Social activity

Mark calendars for the Dante Club's signature cioppino dinner, a taste of San Francisco and the Liguria Coast, on March 16.

Chef Michael Talani and his Dante Club crew will prepare the meal. Cocktails will be at 5 p.m. The dinner will include dancing and a raffle with prizes.

Reservations will be limited. The cost is \$75 per person. This event is a club fundraiser and is also open to the public.

Scholarship deadline

Midnight March 31 is the deadline for high school seniors interested in applying for Dante Club scholarships to do so.

Applications are available online. For any questions, send an email to Richard Battistessa at drbattistessa@comcast.net.

Annual dinner payments

Members will once again be able to pay annually for monthly meeting night dinners.

When paying in advance, members cannot receive a refund or a credit for any individual dinner they don't attend, but they don't need to tell the event center if they will or won't attend as they have already paid.

For reservation substitutions, members must call 916-925-8230 by noon the day of the event and give the substitute's name.

Substitutions not confirmed by noon can't be honored.

Club apparel

The Dante Club works with Julie Brown at Premier Graph-x to brand clothing with the club logo, including hats, T-shirts, jackets and aprons.

Members can order clothing items at danteclub.shopgraphx.com or they can contact coordinator Mark Pedroncelli at peddc@surewest.net or 916-812-6729.

For special orders, contact Julie Brown at 916-787-0603 or julie@premieregraphx.net.



NFL icons deserve respect for their contributions

By Tom Novi

As we wrap up the 2023-24 National Football League season, a moment of respect is owed to many of the great Italian American players, coaches and league figures of the past and present.

No name looms larger than that of Vince Lombardi, coach of the Green Bay Packers and for whom the Super Bowl Trophy is named. Such icons of the Super Bowl as Joe Montana and Dan Marino also are at the top of the list.

This year, Eagles head coach Nick Siriani (and Big Sal, infamous head of security), Joe Flacco and others too numerous to mention did not quite make it through the playoffs. But we should mention the DeBartolo family, owners of the San Francisco 49ers, one of the great NFL names.

A new name few may recognize is Terry Pegula, owner of the Buffalo Bills, the Buffalo Sabers hockey team and many other sports teams. Pegula is a self-made billionaire through his success in petroleum exploration.

So let's take a moment to tip our fedoras to these Italian Americans, all great NFL icons.

Conference unites groups to preserve Italian history

Italian American organizations across the country are heeding the call of Basil M. Russo, president of the Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations, to join the conference.

The conference currently consists of 63 cultural, educational, fraternal and anti-defamation groups that seek to preserve and promote Italian American history and traditions for today's and tomorrow's generations. Among them are eight new member groups that joined Dec. 30, including the Dante Club of Sacramento.

The other seven are:

- Delaware Italian American Foundation
- Louisiana Italian American Political Action Committee
- Pirandello Lyceum
- San Francisco Italian Athletic Club
- Societa da Vinci
- Ulster County Italian American Foundation
- World's Leading Personalities

See CONFERENCE, Page 9

President's Corner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

approved to become members.

It makes me wonder why so many of our members continue to pay dues but are never seen at any functions. When I joined the club a little over 10 years ago, there was a waiting list to become a member.

I also remember Mother's Day and Father's Day brunches and a fizz brunch. All of these have disappeared due to lack of attendance.

The Dante Event Center offers a very reasonably priced Sunday Night Family Dinner the first Sunday of most months.

The dinner is open to the public, although it's primarily intended as a social activity for members and their families and friends.

More than 200 people attended the January dinner, but fewer than a dozen members were present.

Another aspect of participation involves members who leave the members meeting right after the meal is finished.

Nearly a dozen or possibly more seem to leave as soon as they have finished eating and are not present for the business portion of the evening.

In the past, early leavers incurred a \$5 fine. The board has voted to reinstate this levy beginning with the February meeting. Of course, the members most affected by this had already left before this announcement was made in January. I hope they will read this column and come prepared, but it will be announced again before the start of this month's dinner.

We installed four new members at our January meeting. I intend to talk with them about their reasons for joining and their thoughts on what we can do to keep them actively participating.



Celebrate Fat Tuesday with traditional doughnuts

Martedì grasso—or Mardi Gras, also known as Shrove or Fat Tuesday—celebrates the end of the Carnevale festival season and is the day before Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins.

In Italy, Carnevale and Fat Tuesday are prime occasions to feast on special foods before the rigors of Lent begin.

These foods include fried dough ribbons or drop doughnuts that go by various names in Italy, depending on the region or town.

This traditional recipe for fried doughnuts is from the Massino family cookbook of Women's Auxiliary member Linda (Norcia) Norce. Linda fondly remembers her abruzzese

JUST LIKE MOM USED TO MAKE

Adrienne DeFazio

grandmother, Santa Norcia, preparing the doughnuts when Linda was growing up in Berwick, Pennsylvania.

SHROVE TUESDAY DROP DOUGHNUTS

Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- ½ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1½ cup flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon oil or melted butter
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon

- Additional granulated sugar for rolling
- Approximately ½ cup raisins (optional)

Directions:

Beat egg and milk together. Separately combine dry ingredients, including raisins, if using. Add remaining ingredients, except for extra granulated sugar, and stir into egg and milk. Drop mixture by tablespoonsful into hot oil, using deep fryer or saucepan. Fry in oil until golden brown. When done, remove doughnuts with slotted spoon and put on paper towels to absorb excess oil. While still warm, roll doughnuts in granulated sugar. Makes about 20 doughnuts.

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Women's Auxiliary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

kitchen, sell raffle tickets and run the raffle. I will have the volunteer sign-up sheet available at the next dinner.

Scholarship applications for high school graduates are being accepted for children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews of Women's Auxiliary members.

I emailed everyone and attached an application to that email. Applications also can be downloaded from the members area of the Dante Club website. Applications are due by March 1.

The Dante Club is looking for Italian family recipes, not only for the

Dante Cookbook but also for the monthly newsletter. Anyone interested can find the recipe application online or can email me to request one. We would love to see any special family recipes.

It's the beginning of the year, which means it's time to pay yearly dues. Please bring \$25 in cash or check to the next meeting or mail it to auxiliary treasurer Tina Luchini Bowers.

I'll see you Feb. 12. Members who need to cancel or who miss the deadline and need to get on the waitlist should only contact vice president Alyse DeFazio at (916) 812-2757.

See Page 10 for photos of the January dinner.

Conference

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

By uniting in the national organization, Russo said, Italian American groups can command the respect and international recognition that's often difficult to achieve on an individual basis.

In the past two years, for example, conference leaders have been afforded access to the President of the United States and the Pontiff of the Catholic Church.

At Russo's request, First Lady Jill Biden hosted an Italian American Heritage Month reception in October at the White House, welcoming a delegation of Italian American leaders from around the country. The occasion was a watershed moment for the Italian American community. Such an event had never before been held, under any administration, at the White House.

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AUXILIARY KICKS OFF 2024 IN STYLE

Women's Auxiliary members, far left, enjoy the January dinner. The event featured raffle prizes and a Venetian Spritz signature drink, below. Member Laura Scarrone, left, donned a blonde wig and a blue cape to pass out raffle tickets.



DANTE'S REMINDERS



Member volunteers

To volunteer, contact George Procida for anything related to buildings and grounds and Joe Porata for anything related to social events. Reach Procida at 916-455-4738 or gprocida@gplandscape.com and Porata at 530-887-1583 or jporata@sbcglobal.net.

Donations

Donate to our scholarship or building funds in memory of a loved one or a friend to keep their legacy going. And buy raffle tickets! Donations can be made online at <https://danteclub.com/donations/>.

Dante Club apparel

To purchase club shirts and other clothing items, contact Mark Pedroncelli at 916-812-6729 or peddc@surewest.net or speak to him at a members meeting. Cash or checks are needed to place orders. Members also can order through the Dante Club website at danteclub.shopgraphx.com.

Newsletter photos and news

Submit photos and news items for *Dante's Inferno* to John Caselli at jac6652@aol.com. Items must be received by the 20th of each month to be considered for the following month's newsletter. Publication depends on available space and is not guaranteed. Members also can post news and photos on the Dante Club's Facebook page.

Contact information

Recently changed an address or phone number? Please alert Tom Mezzanares at 916-467-7483 or tjmezzan@gmail.com.