

Pledge to keep active in the Dante Club in 2026

DANTE'S INFERNO



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Pat Orelli

President bids adieu as service comes to an end

The statement "time flies" surely grows in meaning the older we all get. The past two years seem to have galloped by as I went from board meeting to members meeting to writing this column to starting over again.

This will be my last column as president of the Dante Club of Sacramento. It has been an honor to serve, and I thank the board and the membership for the opportunity. It has been a humbling experience for an Italian-Swiss, whose father jokingly referred to our heritage as Mediterranean-Irish because so many people mispronounced our name and wanted to add an apostrophe.

At this month's members meeting, we will have our annual election of directors—if it can truly be called an

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Gloria Tomei, front row at left, gathers with fellow tourists in a scenic garden during one of two trips to Italy that she organized for the Dante Club.



Dante Club travelers to Lucca in 2002 earn coverage in the local edition of a regional Italian newspaper. Many in the group have roots in the Lucca area.

LOOKING BACK

Gloria Tomei: Dante Club's travel organizer per eccellenza

By Marie Waldron Booth

or the past several months, I've been writing about the evolution of the Dante Club and the Women's Auxiliary, from their inception in 1926 and the first clubhouse on 1511 P Street, until today at the Dante Event Center at 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd.

Although the club's location has changed, its purpose has remained the same throughout the years. First and foremost, Dante is a social club that exists to provide Italian Americans with a place to have fun, sustain their heritage and support good citizenship.

I recently had the pleasure of spending time with 94-year-old Gloria (DaPrato) Tomei as she reminisced about her years in the auxiliary. Over the years, Gloria has held every position on the board, finally becoming president. During that time, she said, board members worked their way up to each position, starting at the bottom.

Gloria remembers going as a child to the old clubhouse with her parents, Maria and Battista DaPrato. She said her sister, Delina Skarles, had her wedding reception at that

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NEWS, NOTES AND OTHERWISE

General manager's report

November at the Dante Event Center brought new and exciting events this year. The Celebrate Biba dinner, honoring late Sacramento celebrity chef Biba Caggiano, drew 250 guests from the club and the public. The evening featured presentations by Caggiano's daughters, Carla and Paola, and by food and wine expert Darrell Corti of Corti Brothers grocery store.

The event was a great representation of Biba Caggiano and an amazing fundraiser for the Dante Club, made possible with the guidance and hard work of the Dante Women's Club.

We also hosted our first Ultimate Football Watch Party with great sports bar-style foods, fun raffles and



Sports fans enjoy the first Ultimate Football Watch Party in November.

drawings. We can't wait to host more parties during this football season to see the fan group grow. Be sure to mark this month's calendar for the next watch party on Dec 14.

November also brought our Sunday Family Dinner, which

oversold at 233 guests. We hosted a number of private events, including weddings, celebrations of life and monthly meetings by groups such as Allied Arts, the Sacramento chapter of the American Public Works Association and two SIR (Sons in Retirement) groups.

We are excited to deck our halls for the season and look forward to what December has to offer. These Dante Club events are planned for the month: Sunday Family Dinner; members dinners; Sentivo Vineyards wine dinner, brought to us by Dante Women's Club member Helen Pierson; Dante Club Christmas Dinner, open to members and their guests; and, to top off the season, the Dante Club Monte Carlo New Year's Eve Party, featuring great small bites, casino gaming and a Champagne toast at 9 p.m. with the New York ball drop. Bring friends and family to ring in the new year!

Starting in January, due to increasing costs in labor, food, liquor and overhead fees, the Sunday Family Dinner price will increase to \$25 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and younger. We appreciate the continued support of the dinner and hope to see everyone again in the coming year.

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December 7

Sunday Family Dinner

Times: 4 p.m. cocktails, 5 p.m. seating, 5:15 p.m. first course **Menu:** Fennel and orange salad, baked ziti, seasonal vegetables, garlic bread, tiramisu cupcakes

Cost: \$22 adults, \$12 children age 12 and younger

Reserve by midnight Friday, Nov. 28.

December 8

Dante Women's Club Dinner

Time: 4:30 p.m. cocktails, 6 p.m. dinner

Menu: Italian Christmas salad with sundried tomato vinaigrette, roasted potatoes with rosemary, prime rib carving station with au jus and horseradish, sauteed green beans with garlic butter, focaccia breadsticks, tiramisu

Cost: \$30 members, \$35 guests Reserve by midnight Friday, Nov. 28.

December 14

Ultimate Football Watch Party

Times: 12:30 p.m. with 1:25 p.m. game start

Menu: Assorted pizzas, chicken wings with assorted sauces,

French fry bar

Cost: \$10 entry, includes one beer or mocktail; \$20 buffet

Raffles featured throughout.

December 15

Dante Members Dinner and Meeting

Times: 6 p.m. cocktails, 7 p.m. dinner, 8 p.m. meeting **Menu:** Caesar salad, fusilli with Bolognese, prime rib carving station with au jus and horseradish, sauteed green beans with garlic butter, rolls and butter, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$30 for members

Reserve by midnight Friday, Dec. 5.

December 18

Sentivo Wine Tasting and Dinner

Times: 5:30 p.m. check-in and cocktails, 6 p.m. tasting **Menu:** Whipped goat cheese crostini with fig and honey, blanc de noir; butternut squash soup with creme fraiche, chardonnay; stuffed portobello mushrooms, petite sirah; filet mignon with truffle butter and mashed potatoes, cabernet sauvignon; black forest cake, pinot noir

Cost: \$90 per person

Reserve by midnight Monday, Dec. 8.

GO TO WEBSITE FOR DETAILS: Christmas dinner, Dec. 21; New Year's Eve Party, Dec. 31; Sunday Family Dinner, Jan. 4; Women's club dinner, Jan. 12; Crab Feed, Jan. 17; Men's club dinner, Jan. 19; Ultimate Football Watch Party, Jan. 25



News, Notes and Otherwise CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Membership

In January, the membership committee will post our year in review, but the tease is that eight new members were added to the club in 2025, four others were voted in and await induction, two applications are in hand with the hope of interviews in December, and one additional application is in the mail.

Sean O'Donoghue, sponsored by Andy Pennisi, was welcomed in November. He is married to Debbie in the Dante Women's Club. He looks like another positive addition to our ranks.

Jon Olivieri and Johnny Magagnini are on the list for us to chat with about membership.

We have a full meeting agenda this month, focusing heavily on annual board elections, but we'll try to also make time to determine if these two candidates are a good fit for the Dante Club.

Inductions of Jay Boundy, Anthony Giannotti and Pete Reali are penciled in for December, unless they wish to reschedule to the January members meeting.

Part of club membership is to pitch in when there's a need. We encourage members to help when asked. We also ask them to reach out to family and friends who may want to join our organization.

Buildings and grounds

The only major task for November was taking down the tent and storing it for the winter. Special thanks go to these members who helped: Don Agostinelli, Steve Lavezzo, Aaron Patella, George Procida, Ron Pane, Dan Calcagno and Ernie Tomassilli.

A few handyman-type repairs will be done in December. We will reach out for volunteers as projects are scheduled.

Newsletter advertising

Dante's Inferno coordinator Tom Mezzanares and the Dante Club board thank our advertisers, whose support helps defray the costs of publishing the newsletter. Anyone interested in advertising in the Inferno in 2026 can email Tom at timezzan@gmail.com.

Legacy fund donations

The Dante Club Legacy Fund was created during the pandemic as a way for members to help the club through a difficult period.

The Dante board of directors has decided to reinvigorate the fund as one of five strategies to pay off the club's remodeling mortgage. Donations to the fund will help retire the mortgage early.

The Legacy Fund has three donation levels: platinum, \$1000 or more; gold, \$500; and silver, \$250. Donors will be recognized annually in the newsletter and at a members dinner. They'll also be honored on a plaque in the Dante Event Center.

Donations will be applied to the mortgage principal each month.

Donors should mail or deliver a check to the Dante Club (attn: treasurer) and give instructions on how the donor or a person honored by the donor should be recognized —what name should be included on the plaque and in the newsletter. Donors may remain anonymous if they prefer.

Club apparel

The Dante Club works with Premier Graph-x to brand clothing with the club logo, including hats, T-shirts, jackets and aprons. Order at danteclub.shopgraphx.com or contact Mark Pedroncelli at peddc@surewest.net or 916-812-6729. For special orders, contact Julie Brown at 916-787-0603 or julie@premieregraphx.net.

Pull-tab program

The Ronald McDonald House charges \$20 per night for parents to stay there while their children receive treatment at UC Davis Medical Center. The pull-tab program helps those who can't afford the cost by accepting donations of aluminum-can pull tabs, which it then sells for cash.

The Dante Club has donated to the program since March 2018. The Women's Club also participates. Our clubs have donated a total of 1,757.7 pounds of pull tabs to the Ronald McDonald House.

Scholarships

Graduating high school seniors seeking a Dante Club scholarship next year must submit applications by March 31. Applications are available online and at the Dante Event Center office.

Students must provide their grade-point average, two letters of recommendation, a personal essay and activities they've participated in during their high school years.

Applicants may apply online at https://danteclub.com/scholarship.info/. For questions or more information, they may email Richard Battistessa at drbattistessa@comcast.net.



2025 Committees and Assignments

COMMITTEES

ADVISORY AND FINANCE

Dan Calcagno, chairman

Members: Tom Mezzanares, Richard Battistessa, George Procida, Tom Novi, Pat Orelli, Joseph Pasquinelli

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

Tom Mezzanares, chairman

SCHOLARSHIP

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Member: Mark Pedroncelli

SOCIAL

Joe Porata, chairman; Rich Battistessa, vice chairman Members: Matt Longo, Ron Pane, Mark Pedroncelli

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

BOCCE

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman Members: Frank Bartucco, Nick Canepa, 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

- Dante Women's Club liaison: Tom Novi
- Check-in desk for club events and raffle: Matt Longo, chairman;
 Bill Maffei, member
- Club apparel: Mark Pedroncelli
- Sergeant-at-arms: Colin Orelli

2024-2025 DANTE CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

- Patrick Orelli, president: <u>pat@apcpagroup.com</u>, 916-369-2327
- Dan Calcagno, first vice president: <u>dmcalcagno@aol.com</u>, 916-481-8368
- Ron Pane, second vice president: repane@icloud.com, 916-798-0111
- Steve DeCristofaro, secretary:
 stefanodad@gmail.com, 916-752-3247
- Joseph Pasquinelli, treasurer: <u>impasquinelli@gmail.com</u>, (708) 805-5242

DIRECTORS

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- Ron Fiorica: rbfiorica@frontiernet.net, 916-687-6406
- Matt Longo: longomb@sbcglobal.net, 916-397-5869
- Bill Maffei: mrmaffei@sbcglobal.net, 916-207-6837
- Tom Mezzanares: timezzan@gmail.com, 916-752-7443
- Brian Noble: ibnoble@gmail.com, 916-217-8836
- Dennis Noble: <u>d.noble35@comcast.net</u>, 916-889-6677
- Tom Novi: tomnovi@aol.com, 916-961-6197
- Mark Pedroncelli: <u>peddc@surewest.net</u>,
 916-812-6729
- Joe Porata: jporata@sbcglobal.net, 530-368-7479
- George Procida: gplandscape.com, 916-455-4738



Biba tribute dinner a bright spot in November

erry December! We enjoyed an early wonderful Thanksgiving meal at our Nov. 8 general membership meeting and dinner. Current officers and board members were unanimously reelected — to thunderous applause!

After many years of hearing members' requests for this to happen, the Women's Auxiliary voted to change its name. The name of the auxiliary going forward will be the Dante Women's Club.

After the success of our "Celebrate Biba" event in November, our members thought the name revision was a much needed change as we have grown in numbers and importance to the Dante Event Center. The women used to serve as an adjunct or auxiliary to the club, but we are now our own entity and, as such, have become a valuable asset to the



DANTE WOMEN'S CLUB NEWS

Debra Cattuzzo

club. We are proud of the force we have become and look forward to working with the men's club to make the Dante Event Center a tremendous success and a long-lasting Italian legacy for generations to come.

Speaking of the incredible power of the club, I had mentioned to the group that I contacted other Italian clubs in the area. One of them, the Sons and Daughters of Italy, shared a fundraiser idea they were doing. They were collecting throw blankets for children in the Specialized Treatment Recovery Services (STARS) program, which works to reunify families that have gone through Sacramento County Child Protective Services, such as





Carla Elkins and Paola McNamara, top photo, speak about their mother, the late Biba Caggiano, during the Celebrate Biba dinner Nov. 8. Wine expert Darrell Corti, above, shares stories about Caggiano and their long friendship.

2025 DANTE WOMEN'S CLUB BOARD

See TRIBUTE, Page 6

- Debra Cattuzzo, president: cattuzzod@gmail.com
- Alyse DeFazio, vice president: <u>alysedefaz@aol.com</u>
- Tina Luchini Bowers, treasurer: tebowers55@gmail.com
- Susan Kasimatis, secretary: sik955@gmail.com

- Anna Tenderella, hospitality: annatenderella03@gmail.com
- Carole Stefani-Meyers, past president: <u>cchivaro2@aol.com</u>
- Karol Buccola, past president: karolrb55@gmail.com
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- Nancy Doyle, trustee/caller: ncdoyle59@gmail.com

- Kathy Holberton, trustee/ caller: <u>crystalgal@yahoo.com</u>
- Roseann Jamison, trustee/ caller: rosieado@yahoo.com
- Donna O'Neil, trustee/caller: <u>rtg4005@gmail.com</u>
- Marie Waldron-Booth, historian: bmbooth@aol.com





The 250 attendees at the Celebrate Biba dinner listen to after-dinner presentations by wine expert Darrell Corti and the late Biba Caggiano's two daughters, Carla Elkins and Paola McNamara.

Tribute **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5**

parents who are recovering from drug and alcohol addictions.

I sent the flier of their fundraiser to our members, and our women acted with incredible generosity. They brought in 30 throw blankets for the children.

Two days after our club meeting, I delivered those blankets to the Sons and Daughters meeting,

and they were overwhelmed and appreciative of our donations.

Speaking of donations, we look forward to donating to the Bishop Gallegos Maternity Home at our Dec. 8 meeting. We have donated for the past two years. It is such a worthy cause.

The home provides housing for homeless women, women escaping a violent environment, recovered drug addicts and pregnant women who need a safe, secure place to live during their pregnancy.

The women live together and are taught how to cook healthy food, do their own laundry and care for their children physically and psychologically.

They also receive health care by nursing student volunteers.

As our November meeting wrapped up, we introduced a new member, Debbie O'Donoghue. She comes from the Italian family name Cartoscelli.

Welcome, Debbie!

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Tribute CONTINUED FROM PAGE

Raffle-prize winners in November were: Catherine O'Donoghue, free dinner; Margaret Lynch, \$50 cash door prize and See's gift card; Adrienne DeFazio, Cinemark gift card; Cindy Pomares, fall gift basket; Janine Orsi, Paesano's gift card; Summer DeFazio, Puddles Shoppe baby gift basket; Terri Waldren, cupcake ferris wheel; Franzi Lopez, Pavilions car wash; Gayle Maita, soup gift basket; Judy Kaminski, Leatherby's gift card; Carole Perri, Peet's gift card; and Sandy Calcagno, wine bottle and wind chime basket, donated by member Claire Quilici.

We look forward to eating prime rib for our December members dinner.

Our Celebrate Biba dinner on Nov. 8 was such a success, with a sold-out crowd of 250 people.

Biba Caggiano was a worldrenowned, Sacramento-based chef whose exclusive Italian restaurant, Biba, in downtown Sacramento delighted diners for more than 33 years.

We wanted to honor her legacy with a five-course meal accompanied by wines specifically chosen by Darrell Corti of Corti Brothers market in east Sacramento.

During the event, Caggiano's daughters, Carla Elkins and Paola McNamara, spoke and shared a video of their mother's life. Corti also spoke, telling stories of his relationship with Caggiano and describing each wine as it accompanied each course.

People were greeted at the door with a glass of Prosecco and proceeded to the bar to view incredible raffle baskets stuffed with Caggiano's cookbooks, food items from Corti and an amazing display of Italian cooking tools and foods from kitchen store iLeoni, thanks to store owner Nancy Jacobs Leoni.

The food was fabulous, and everyone was impressed with the beautiful table settings and the entire evening.

Great job and many thanks to these Dante Women's Club members and friends: Nancy Leoni, Debra Cattuzzo, Susan Kasimatis, Adrienne DeFazio, Alyse DeFazio, Francesca Carleson, Meghan Giannotti, Vicki White, Cathy Eister, Anna Tenderella, Donna O'Neill, Norma Petta, Tina Bowers, Suzie Rozewski, Jean Marie Bilello, Natalie Cvitanov, Liane Leavitt and Toni Boracchia.

President's Corner CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

election—and the new board will elect officers for the next two years.

Last month's meeting was a major disappointment when nominations failed to produce enough members willing to fill all the vacancies

There was a time not that long ago in this club when members vied for a position on the board and campaigned at the Christmas dinner held on the Sunday preceding the members meeting. Where are those new

members who have been around just over two years and who agreed to participate fully when interviewed?

Perhaps we should amend the bylaws to eliminate the mandatory day for the Christmas dinner since it has been ignored the past couple of years and no longer serves a purpose.

We might also consider lowering the two-year membership requirement to one year and permit election of associate members to the board, but not as officers.

I want to congratulate the recently renamed Dante Women's

Club on its marvelous Nov. 8 dinner tribute to the late Biba Caggiano. I have heard nothing but positive comments and regret I wasn't able to attend. The women not only met their goal of 250 attendees but also generated a \$6,090 profit for the Dante Club. Thank you!

Another of the Dante Event Center's wonderful wine-pairing dinners is scheduled for Dec. 18. Members should make reservations soon as these excellent events should not be missed

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Travel CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

location. In the early years of the auxiliary, the women did their own cooking and couldn't become members unless their husbands were Dante Club members

Gloria greatly enriched the club's social life by organizing outings and events—too many, in fact, to list all of them here.

Gloria said that Pat Gliebe first asked her to plan a bus trip to Oakland, and her efforts just snowballed from there.

Through the years, she planned trips to casinos and to plays and dinners in San Francisco. Trip participants traveled by bus, boat, train and plane. They took a river cruise, rode the Napa wine train and visited Yosemite, Las Vegas, the Italian Festival in Reno and Pebble Beach. They toured the Christmas lights in San Francisco.

She said two highlights were a performance at the event center by Mitch Franco and a tour of Italy that she planned for members. Franco was a young singer she saw in Reno at a Columbus Day celebration. Everyone loved him, so she arranged



Denise Franzoia, center, and her husband, Al, seated beside her, enjoy a meal in Italy. Among other travelers on Gloria Tomei's trips to Italy were Gloria DaPrato; the Franzoias' son, Mark; Kathy Traversi; Shauna Smith and her husband; Janet Fibich and her husband; and Willie DaPrato.

for him to perform at the Dante Club. The event cost \$15 a person.

Appetizers were served, and Franco performed songs by Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Bobby Darin.

A 1999 trip to Italy with 25 travelers was the most memorable event for her. Unfortunately, outings stopped during the pandemic, and no one has stepped up to fill Gloria's shoes.

Gloria is just one member who has made our club better for all of us. But we can also give thanks to the many people, officers and members who in the past 100 years have given so much of their time to make the Dante Club what it is today.

As we approach our 100th anniversary, it might be time for each of us to think about how we can enrich our club and, in doing so, also enrich the lives of our fellow Italians and the greater Sacramento community.

The challenge now for Dante Club and Women's Club members is how to pay tribute to our ancestors who founded and supported the club while also making it relevant for our children and grandchildren for another 100 years. It won't be an easy task. As the Italians would say: "In bocca al lupo."

Next year, 2026, will be a year full of 100th anniversary celebrations and will be a great time to get involved.

It's been my pleasure to write these articles detailing the history of the Dante Club.

I hope people have enjoyed reading as much as I have enjoyed writing the stories that members have shared with me.



Want to book a personal event? Don't delay

The Dante Event Center is booking into the 2027 event season.

Any club members interested in hosting a personal event at the center should inquire as early as possible.

To host an event, a member must first schedule a meeting with general manager Jennifer Peretti or event coordinator Ashley Perham.

Available dates and rooms, type of event, estimated guest count, timing, catering needs and other pertinent details will be discussed.

The member's desired room and date will be placed on hold for two weeks to allow time to decide if the center is the place for the event, without the date getting booked in the meantime.

At the end of the two weeks, if a security deposit has not been received, the date will be released.

To confirm an event, a deposit must be paid and a contract must be signed and dated.

Members can rent a banquet room at a 50% discount for a personal event for themselves, for family members— limited to spouses, parents and children—or for a personally owned business.

Members with questions about the discount may contact club president Pat Orelli at 916-369-2327.

For event inquiries, send an email to info@danteclub.com or call 916-925-8230.

Support our paesanos:









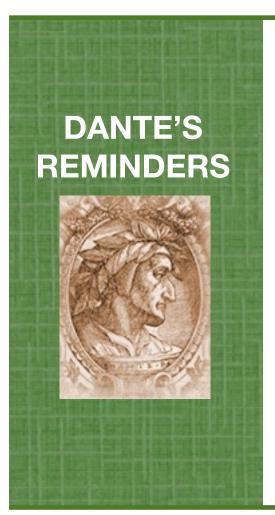






MORE BIBA

Dante Women's Club president Debra Cattuzzo, far left, serves Prosecco to member Terri Rossi and her guest during the special tribute dinner honoring the late Biba Caggiano on Nov. 8. Beautiful place settings and centerpieces, at left and below, brought elegance to the affair, attended by a record number of people. The event raised \$6,090 for the Dante Club



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 530-368-7479 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 Tom Mezzanares at tjmezzan@gmail.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. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, accuracy, style and length. 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 Dan Calcagno at 916-481-8638 or dmcalcagno@aol.com.