



40 Years of the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee - NY, Inc.

M. T. (September 29, 2016)



Founded in 1976 by Dr. Angelo Gimondo, who at that time was the Superintendent of a Queens school district, the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee - NY, Inc. turns 40 this year. The non-profit group is behind some of the major events and celebrations held in the City during what is widely known as the “Italian Heritage and Culture Month” - October. We sat with its current President and Chariman, Mr. Joseph Sciamè.

What is the mission of the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee?

It is the same as when founded, that is, to heighten public awareness of Italian heritage and culture. We engender pride in Italian Americans regarding their own heritage and encourage positive portrayals of Italian Americans in the media and with the general public. We carry on our mission in many ways. We coordinate sponsorship of programs that celebrate Italian heritage and culture; we promote the study of Italian language and culture among all ethnic groups, and of course we sponsor annually the Italian Heritage and Culture Month activities.



What is its relationship with other major Italian American organization such as NIAF, Columbus Citizens Foundation, the Order of Sons of Italy?

They support us financially, and we at the IHCC help them to coordinate, into one magazine, all of the many activities that take place from September through December, with the emphasis on the many programs in October. The magazine is underwritten by large donations from the [Columbus Citizens Foundation](#) [2], [the Order of Sons of Italy](#) [3], the [National Italian American Foundation](#) [4], and others. In addition, many Italian Americans support us as well with corporate donations and sponsorships. This year's Magazine is some sixty pages and is very comprehensive; we will distribute some 7500 copies.

What have been its major achievements?

Well, for a full list I should refer you to our magazine, which is now available. But one major contribution by the IHCC is that each year we have a theme for the celebrations and produce a poster which, for the recent years, has been designed by our Artistic director, John Battista DeSantis. Those posters are memorable as are the various booklets and the magazine that we are now producing. Furthermore, we have sponsored a concert in the Park at NYU, delivered symposia on a variety of topics, honored various individuals with our annual Leonardo da Vinci Award, and we have held ceremonies for flag raising at the Mother Italy Statue at the Hunter college Poses Park on 68th street. So much has taken place over the last forty years!

What's the best Italian Culture Month that you remember?

Each month is historic and noteworthy, but I feel that when we celebrated Christopher Columbus in 1992, that was important for we saluted a true discoverer. Columbus opened a New World and yet today we continue the fight to keep that day and weekend "our" day as Italians and Italian Americans. Another memorable year was most recently in 2015, when we honored the Milan Expo and recalled the New York Worlds' Fair some 50 years apart.

What is the theme of this year's celebrations?

This year we are commemorating "[40 Years Celebrating Italian Heritage and Culture in America](#) [5]." We are also honoring the 70th anniversary of the Republic of Italy that commenced on June 2, 1946. We are fully partnered with the Italian Consulate General and the Embassy of Italy on all of what we do, and so the year is a double celebration.

Any plans for the future that you would like to share?

We have so much to celebrate this year — a RUBY year - our 40th!!! — that we have not turned that page yet! So plans for 2017 will have to wait. But we're always looking forward.

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[5] <http://www.italyculturemonth.org>