



The News

THE AMERICAN ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

A Nonprofit Corporation; Omaha, NE

Feast of the Epiphany Celebration

Sunday, January 4th 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

We are very happy that we can celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany again this year. This has been an AIHS family event for many, many years. The Epiphany is one the best family events we hold! This ethnic event is part of our Italian culture. The Befana and Santa will be visiting and giving bags of treats to children under age 12.

Doors Open at 12:30, Pasta & Meatball. Dinner will be served at 1:30 pm. Refreshments available at the cash bar. Program with Santa and the Befana following the dinner.

Complimentary dinner for Current/Paid Members.
Guests welcome with recommended \$14 donation.

Members, please bring a dessert to share with everyone.

Reservations are necessary to know how much food to prepare.
And how many children under 12 for gift bags.

Call **402-493-8888** or email **secretary@omahaitaly.com** by Friday, January 2nd. Thank you!



The Tradition of La Befana

January 6th is also known as La Befana. In Italian folklore, Befana is an old soot-covered woman or witch who delivers presents to Italian children on the night before La Befana (Epiphany Eve).

The story goes that on their way to see the infant Jesus, the Magi stopped to ask Befana for directions and asked her to join them. She initially refused, but later had a change of heart and tried to find the manger. She was unable to find the baby Jesus and gave the gifts she had brought to other children. To this day, she travels on her broomstick every year on January 5th looking for the manger and giving her presents to any Italian child who leaves out a shoe or hangs up a stocking on Epiphany Eve. This legend arose in the 13th century and for a long time La Befana was a tradition confined to Rome and the surrounding regions, but this festival has become popular across all of Italy in the last hundred years.

The Mission Statement of the American Italian Heritage Society

The fundamental purpose of the American Italian Heritage Society is to encourage, promote and preserve Italian culture and heritage with its activities centered upon Italian traditions, foods, language, culture, history, religion, folklore, customs, celebrations, music and family genealogy. Your president and board of directors are dedicated to this mission but we need your moral and financial support to be successful.

The News is a monthly publication of the American Italian Heritage Society, an independent, nonprofit organization, legally incorporated in Nebraska. The deadline for submissions is the second Wednesday of the month. Correspondence and articles can be sent to secretary@omahaitaly.com.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Epiphany Celebration Sunday, January 4, 2026 - please RSVP by Friday, January 2nd

No January Membership Meeting

Carnevale at Pasta Amore Tuesday, February 17th

December 2025 Membership Meeting Report

Prior to meeting a social hour was held for attending members, during which merry camaraderie was had and members enjoyed Festa Sausage Pizza prepared by Micky Bolamperti and cooked and served by Sal and Larry Belfiore. An Italian salad was also served by Tom Morinelli. The General Membership meeting, held on December 8, 2025, was called to order at 7:30 pm by President Terry Bolamperti and was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance with veterans Nick Phillips and Larry Belfiore as flag-bearers. There were over 34 members in attendance. Members were asked to take a moment of silence to pray for all of the Society members who are currently ill and they were asked to keep them and their families in their thoughts and prayers. The minutes of last month's meeting were read and approved. The Treasurers Report was given by President Terry Bolamperti which was approved by members. Old business was discussed including the Festa. Most all expenses have been paid. Last months successful Spaghetti Dinner reported serving over 600 dinners to members and guests. Last months Board Elections were held resulting in the naming of Lauren Orsi, Sara Bartolomei, and Beth Gibbs as new Board members. They once again received an applause of congratulations.

New Business discussed was the upcoming Sausage Fundraiser. Volunteers were needed for cutting pork on Thursday, Dec. 11th and on Saturday, Dec. 13th. Special thanks was given to Larry Pence and his crew (always Carmen Grosse and others) for all their efforts in the week following Thanksgiving in which the olives were rinsed, cracked, brined, spiced and placed in quarts with celery and carrots. Besides this Larry's crew prepped and quart-ed all the pepper sauce along with dispensing over 7 buckets (5 gallon each) of spaghetti sauce into quart containers. The membership gave Larry Pence a well deserved applause of appreciation. It was also announced that John Portera, Joe Daniels and Larry Belfiore purchased the bar supplies and offered the bar as complimentary to members who gave them an appreciative round of applause.

They Epiphany Celebration which will be held on Sunday January 4, 2026. Emma Leo-Mueller will once again be chairing this event at which the meal is complimentary for members and all are invited to attend and donations would be much appreciated. Refreshments will be available at the cash bar. Santa Claus and the Befana will also be there. Volunteers are needed and were asked to call Beth at the office if anyone could help and to also call in for reservations with the number of adults and children (under age 12) attending.

The Dan Polley-Lou Buda Awards honor members in recognition of their dedication, service and tireless efforts that exemplify selfless volunteerism that help promote and preserve Italian heritage to ensure the success of the AIHS. The winners for the Society's Man and Woman of the Year were Joe Daniels and Beth Gibbs. A brief explanation of the meaning of this award was given. Terry Bolamperti noted all the services that these award winners offered to the Society over the years. They were most deserving of this prestigious honor. Photos were taken of the Award presentation and there were many members in attendance who were winners of this award in years past.

Terry Bolamperti gave the President's Annual Report of the Transactions and accomplishments of the Society. The meeting was adjourned and the Piece of the Pie winners drawn were John Portera and Joe Daniels who graciously donated the monies back to the Society. There were also several special Christmas gift winners were drawn. The Christmas Italian Cookie Exchange was enjoyed by all. This year's Italian cookie exchange offered an array beautiful and delicious homemade Italian cookies. There is no January meeting but we hope all come to the Epiphany Celebration on January 4 we also hope you can come to the Feb 13th membership meeting. Buon Natale!

Submitted by President Dr. Terry Bolamperti

2025 DAN POLLEY - LOU BUDA AWARD

AIHS Man and Woman of the Year

JOE DANIELS and BETH GIBBS

“In recognition of their dedication, service and tireless effort in preserving and promoting Italian culture and heritage”

Every year since our inception the American Italian Heritage Society has recognized from our membership an individual man and woman who have exemplified extraordinary dedication and service to the Society. These men and women have expended tireless hours without any expectation of gratitude or recognition. They are the glue that keeps us together and they are the generators that propel our Society to be a success in the promotion of Italian culture and heritage. There are many, many members that deserve this honor and it is always a difficult choice to make. We are now recognizing the award recipients for the **2025 AIHS Man and Woman of the Year**. Past award winners contributed in the selection process of this year’s recipients. This year’s well-deserved Dan Polley-Lou Buda Award winners are **Beth Gibbs and Joe Daniels**.

Society member **Beth Gibbs** has offered her services as a volunteer for many years since she moved to Omaha and became a member. She never fails to bring a delicious homemade Italian food item to every Social Hour before the Membership Meetings. She has volunteered to help at the Sausage fundraisers, Pasta Dinners, Wine Tastings events and Festa activities. At the Wine Tasting she makes the most delicious and popular “Tiramisu”. Very innovative, she comes up with new pastry options for the Bake Sales. Beth has volunteered to be the Captain of the very busy T-Shirt Booth at the Festa for the last couple years, running it smoothly with great volunteers. She has even given much appreciated back-rubs and massages to aching volunteers at the Festa (Jimmy Mazzei and others). She organized the online Christmas T-Shirt sale last month with limited designs to be ordered and picked up at the Palazzo. At the fall Pasta Dinner, Beth came up with an innovative idea to make cute, distinctive gift baskets and sell raffle tickets. She was very generous and donated all the costs of the baskets and their contents. There was a very good profit for her efforts for the Society. Beth is currently serving as a member of the AIHS Board of Directors. Beth gives a lot of herself and is very deserving of this honor as the AIHS Woman of the Year.



Joe Daniels has been a longtime member and he has been involved in lots of volunteering throughout the years. Joe works for A&D Technical Supply and very often does complimentary printing for the Society. He and his family have Co-Captained, along with the John Portera family, and ran the Sausage and Meatball Booth at the Festa for years going back to the Readiness Center. For the last 12 years he has run the Festa Inside Bar along with John Portera and their families. Joe has also been a member of the Festa Organizational Committee for years. He has run the bar, with John Portera, at the Spaghetti Dinners and the Epiphany Celebrations and for many Palazzo rental events. He always shows up every month an hour early to set up for the bar and helps bartend at all the Social Hours and Membership Meetings, along with running the monthly “Piece of the Pie” drawings. Joe is a great volunteer and always serves with a smile without any need for recognition. We appreciate his efforts and dedication. Joe is very deserving of this honor as the AIHS Man of the Year.



On behalf of the members of the American Italian Heritage Society we congratulate them. We are very grateful for all that Beth Gibbs and Joe Daniels have done for the success of the Society. We thank them for their countless hours of dedicated service when and wherever needed. They are most deserving of this award. Congratulations Beth and Joe! Mille Grazie.

Submitted by President Terry Bolamperti

Mushroom Soup

pg. 31

Pat Vance

1 lb. mushrooms	1 1/2 c. chicken stock, broth or bouillon
Juice of 1/2 lemon	1 tsp. salt
1 T. butter	1/2 tsp. fresh ground pepper
2 T. minced shallots	1 tsp. cornstarch
1/2 bay leaf	1 T. water
1/4 tsp. dried thyme	1 T. chopped fresh parsley
2 c. whipping cream	



Dissolve corn starch in water. Chop mushrooms with lemon juice. Melt butter in large skillet over medium heat. Add shallots and saute lightly. Add mushrooms, bay leaf and thyme; cook stirring frequently until liquid is completely evaporated, about 10 minutes. Blend in cream, chicken stock, salt & pepper; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes. Add dissolved cornstarch and simmer for 10 minutes longer. Adjust seasonings. Ladle into heated bowls and garnish with parsley.

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We appreciate your
DONATION!

A MESSAGE FROM THE AIHS BOARD:

This is a quick reminder that AIHS is a 501C3 charitable organization and as such, any financial gifts are tax deductible during the year which the gift was sent (subject to various IRS regulations). A very brief overview of the AIHS financial situation is that we have debt on our building of about \$2,000,000.00. The weather during Festa 2025 was less than favorable which caused our income to fall short of what we need to be successful. Please consider a charitable gift to AIHS to help the Society financially and to reduce your own federal and state tax liability. If you are quick, you may be able to count it as a 2025 tax deduction!



2025 AIHS PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

As directed by the By-Laws, the President of the American Italian Heritage Society is to give a written annual report of the transactions, accomplishments and condition of the Society. This was presented at the December 8, 2025 General Membership Meeting by President Terry Bolamperti. Many members and guests have attended activities and events at the Palazzo. It has been an extremely busy year for the Society with our scheduled fundraisers, meetings and events. Our membership has a home that we can all be proud of which will fulfill the needs of the Society and serve the needs for future generations. Our leadership and volunteers have been very active making the Society a success. Our mission of promoting, encouraging and preserving our Italian heritage and culture has kept us busy and has been accomplished in the year 2025. These accomplishments include:

- General Membership Monthly Meetings were held and Social Hours were held 1 hour before stating meetings.
- The Celebration of Epiphany was held in January at the Palazzo, chaired by Emma Mueller.
- The Carnevale was successfully celebrated in February at Pasta Amore.
- Sausage Fundraisers were held in March (Easter), June (4th of July) and in December (Christmas) at the Palazzo.
- St. Joseph's Day Celebration was held in conjunction with the Spring Pasta Dinner and chaired by Joe Gregory.
- Successful AIHS Spaghetti Dinners were held in April and November at the Palazzo.
- Society Food Specialties have been sold at all Sausage Fundraisers and Spaghetti Dinners
- Our Annual Wine Tasting Event was held in May at the Palazzo.
- The AIHS Summer Picnic was held in June on the Festa grounds, chaired by Tom Morinelli.
- In July and August food preparation was done for the Festa.
- The AIHS Scholarships were awarded to Camryn Dragsten and Marco Mancuso.
- A very successful 41st annual La Festa Italiana was celebrated Labor Day weekend at the Palazzo.
- New Board Members, Beth Gibbs, Lauren Orsi and Sara Bartolomei were elected in November.
- The Italian Christmas Cookie Exchange was enjoyed by all at the December Membership Meeting.
- The Dan Polley-Lou Buda Awards for the 2025 AIHS Man and Woman of the Year were awarded to Joe Daniels and Beth Gibbs at the December Membership Meeting.
- The Society has contracted Catering Creations as a Event Planner and Manager for rental events at the Palazzo.
- Our building and home, the Palazzo, is unprecedented in the Midwest and will be a focus of Italian activity for generations to come. The Palazzo is a testament to the pride, will and efforts of the Italians of the Omaha community and the selfless and dedicated efforts and determination of the members of the Society. This was our 11th year in our home.

The State of the American Italian Heritage Society is Strong, Vital and Growing.

OUR SOCIETY HAS A GREAT FUTURE

PRAYERS FOR OUR MEMBERS

Please keep in your thoughts and prayers our members who are ill, including Ted Bolamperti, George Grillo, Cookie Mascarello-Ladwig, Geno Crisafulli, Maria Leo, Margo Pirruccello, Ann Marie Falco-Marr, Judge Joe Troia, Tara & Tim Virgilito, Cecilia Bellinghiere, Sam & Lucy Marasco, Lou Buda, Joan Gentzler, Kathy Eichelberg, Leo Fascianella, Tony Anderson, and Heather Goertz—daughter of Gary & Mary Kay Ford.

PLEASE CONSIDER ADVERTISING WITH US

We are looking for additional businesses to advertise in our monthly newsletter. If you have a business or know of one that would like to advertise in our newsletter, we encourage you to call the office at 402-493-8888 x 1 or email Secretary@OmahaItaly.com

AIHS COOKBOOKS FOR SALE

Our original cookbook “A Taste of Italy” is still available for sale for \$25.00 tax included. There are many great authentic, family recipes and Society specialties.

Christmas Sausage Fundraiser Report

The Society had a successful Sausage Fundraiser on December 13th, in which we sold out of all Society specialties that were made by member volunteers. Thanks goes to the crews that made the sausage, the peppers, the olives, the salad dressing, the spaghetti sauce and the meatballs. Special thanks is also extended to Julia Brecht-Johnson and Linda Ternent who offered to donate the supplies and sell freshly made pizzelles to the crowd picking-up their orders. It was non-stop 3 hours of making and selling Christmas pizzelles. We appreciate all who helped in any way to make this fundraiser a huge success. Mille Grazie!





THE AMERICAN ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING



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