

The Grapevine

A Publication From
The Italian American Chamber of Commerce of Michigan
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Visit Our Website at: www.iaccm.net



Upcoming EVENTS

FEBRUARY 7, 2024 • WEDNESDAY • MONTHLY MEETING

TIME

- 6:00 PM Board Meeting
- 6:30 PM General Membership Meeting

LOCATION

- Zuccaro's Banquet Center
46601 Gratiot Avenue, Chesterfield



MARCH 6, 2024 • WEDNESDAY • MONTHLY MEETING

TIME

- 6:00 PM Board Meeting
- 6:30 PM General Membership Meeting

LOCATION

- San Marino Club, 1685 E. Big Beaver Road, Troy



APRIL 3, 2024 • WEDNESDAY • MONTHLY MEETING

TIME

- 6:00 PM Board Meeting
- 6:30 PM General Membership Meeting

LOCATION

- MRCC Banquet Center, 23397 Mound Road, Warren

MAY 1, 2024 • WEDNESDAY • MONTHLY MEETING

TIME

- 6:00 PM Board Meeting
- 6:30 PM General Membership Meeting

- Villa Penna • 43985 Hayes Road, Sterling Heights

JUNE 5, 2024 • WEDNESDAY • MONTHLY MEETING

Scholarship Awards Dinner

TIME

- 6:00 PM Board Meeting
- 6:30 PM General Membership Meeting

LOCATION

- Andiamo Italia, 7096 E. 14 Mile Road, Warren



Notes from the PRESIDENT

Thank you for the warm welcome and congratulations on being elected as your President! I am thrilled to be part of this new induction of the Board of Directors and excited to work alongside you to achieve our goals for the Italian American Chamber of Commerce of Michigan.

Our vision of growth in membership and expanding our committees with new members' involvement is truly inspiring. It is through a diverse and engaged membership base that we can foster innovation, collaboration, and ultimately create a stronger community within our Chamber. As the newly appointed President, I would like to share my vision for the upcoming year.

One focus is to further expand our membership base, attracting professionals from diverse backgrounds who can bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the table. By increasing our membership, we can broaden our reach and influence, ensuring a greater impact on our community.

In addition to membership growth, I strongly believe in the power of committees and their ability to drive meaningful change. I plan on actively encouraging new members to get involved in our committees, offering them opportunities to contribute their unique skills and expertise. This diverse engagement will not only enhance the quality of our committee work but also foster collaboration and innovation within our organization.

I am committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where all members feel valued and empowered. I believe that by incorporating new voices and perspectives, we can develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the needs and aspirations of our members. Together, we will strive for excellence and work towards achieving our collective goals.

I am confident that with my leadership, and the guidance of

Notes From The President

Continued from page 1

those who came before me, we will be able to bring new ideas and initiatives to the table. As we embark on this new year, let us remember the importance of collaboration and inclusivity. By actively seeking input from all members and encouraging their active participation, we can tap into a wealth of knowledge and experience that will propel our Chamber forward.

I look forward to working closely with you and the rest of the Board to develop and implement strategies that will bring added value to our members. Together, we will create opportunities, foster connections, and promote the growth of Italian American businesses in Michigan.

Once again, congratulations to the new Officers and Board of Directors, and here's to a successful and fulfilling year ahead for the Italian American Chamber of Commerce of Michigan!

Charles Moran,
President

2024 OFFICER/BOARD OF DIRECTOR ELECTION RESULTS

At the January 3rd General Membership Meeting at the Italian American Cultural Center, the newly elected Officers and Board of Directors were sworn in. Congratulations to the following:

OFFICERS

- **President – Charles Moran**
- **1st Vice President – Joseph Divozzo**
- **2nd Vice President – Philip J. Maniaci**
- **Secretary – Aaron Marentette**
- **Treasurer – Michael Locricchio**

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

- **Daniel Galli**

PAST PRESIDENTS 2024

- **Joseph P. Ventimiglia**
- **Salvatore Ventimiglia**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

~ Term ending 2026

- **Joseph Burke**
- **Frank Coppola**
- **Michel Tenaglia**

~ Partial Term ending 2025

- **Greg Gagnon**

~ Partial Term Ending 2024

- **Peter Fuciarelli**



Chairman's CORNER

Welcome 2024 and Happy New Year to all our members and their families! It is an honor to serve the IACCM as the Chairman of the Board. I would like to congratulate our new President, Charles Moran, and I look forward to working alongside him, our Officers and Board members this year as together we plan to make this another great year for our organization.

This being my first time serving as Chairman, I feel confident I can do the job having learned from those who have served before me. I will do my best to guide our meetings to run smoothly and therefore be as productive as possible.

As I look back, the last several years have seen our organization continue to grow. It is important to keep growing, and the way we will do that is to keep our members involved. Some of the best networking opportunities come from joining one of our committees. Our reverse raffle, the Festa Della Lira, for example, requires the participation of several people to be successful. There is also a need for help at the Italian Festival, where we have a booth setup and we run a 50-50 raffle. Our vision committee is always looking ahead to find new ways to enhance our meetings and come up with events that would interest our Chamber members. Perhaps you can join in and share your thoughts. Continued growth and fresh ideas are important to the IACCM and will be a focus of our new President. Together we can reach our goals for 2024 and beyond.

Once again, Happy New Year and I'll see you at the next meeting!

Go Lions!

Daniel Galli

IN MEMORIAM



James Schmelzer, "Sir James", passed suddenly on September 27, 2023, at the age of 63. The loving and devoted father of IACC member Andria. Loving friend and photographer to so many in the Italian community. He will be truly missed!

Frank J. Gallo, long time IACC member, passed away peacefully in his home surrounded by family, prayer and love on Sunday, October 1, 2023. Loving father to IACCM member Tony Gallo, and beloved father-in-law to member Val Poliuto. Rest in peace Frank, you were truly loved.





Notes from the Past President

As I write this message, my year as President of this great Chamber of Commerce has come to an end. I feel that it was an exciting and productive year. Our major events (which included The John Agosta Memorial Golf Outing, Scholarship Awards Night, Festa Italiana 2023 and the Festa Della Lira) were all very successful. Each of these events showed how much we shine as a Chamber of Commerce. I am very impressed and proud of how our membership has stepped up to volunteer, contribute and/or participate in each and every event.

In the summer, our Chamber took the lead in a partnership with The Detroit Tigers to bring back Italian Heritage Night after a 3-year hiatus brought on by covid. I think that we did an admirable job in our initial effort. We had a good response from our members and their families. The entertainment that we sponsored, Aaron Caruso and 10 year old Lia Lucci, knocked it out of the park. They truly showed how much talent we have in the Italian American community in Metro Detroit. It is my hope that we, as a Chamber, can build on this partnership in the coming years.

I am extremely encouraged by our steady increase in membership. We have now eclipsed the 200 member mark. The addition of more women and younger members has helped to make our Chamber more diverse, which bodes well for the long term future of our group. Our Board of Directors now includes two women and several young board members that are under 40 years old.

We had much sadness in 2023 and I ask that you keep the families of our beloved members, Jim Smeltzer and Frank Gallo, in your thoughts and prayers. These two men exemplified what our Chamber is all about. These were men of high character who were always willing to give of their time, money and talents. They will be missed. Also, please keep the members who are dealing with health issues in your thoughts and prayers. The power of prayer can go a long way.

Finally, I would like to thank and commend my wife, Linda, who typed and proofread my thoughts over the past year for my Grapevine President's messages, it is much appreciated.

Respectfully yours,

Mark Garagiola
Immediate Past President



Italian-American Chamber of Commerce Birthdays for:

February

2/1 Guerrieri, John
2/3 Gagnon, Greg
2/4 Forlini, Anthony
2/6 Paglia, Paul
2/7 Gatti, Hon. Julie
2/8 Mercurio, Vincen
2/9 Fuciarelli, Peter A.
2/11 Magnotte, Gerald
2/13 Provenzano, Noah
2/16 Wolf, Edward M.
2/17 DeLuca, Antonio
2/19 Notte, Michael R.
2/20 DiLorenzo, Frank
2/22 Jozefiak, Victoria
2/24 Lucido, III, Peter J.
2/27 Gaglio, Philip J.
2/27 Salerno, Dr. Ramo A.

March

3/2 Jakubec, Christy A.
3/4 Fuciarelli, Pietro G.
3/5 Shermetaro, Charles G.
3/6 Pippi-Soave, Angela M.
3/7 Congiolo, Alisha
3/8 Carnaghi, Donald
3/12 Bonanni, Jeffrey A.
3/14 Piccinini, Ned R.
3/17 Rubino, Anthony M.
3/17 Bommarito, Benedict
3/18 Vicari, Joseph
3/23 Santeufemia, Michael N.
3/23 Lucido, Alex
3/24 Esposito, Gino

3/26 Giannetti, Frank
3/30 Garagiola, Mark D.
3/30 Picano, Domenic

April

4/3 Calunas, William A.
4/5 Iacona, Joseph
4/7 Calcaterra, Michael J.
4/12 Poliuto, Valerio
4/13 Buffa, Ross
4/17 Canzano, Roger
4/18 Minoletti, Gary
4/19 Lanni, Angelo S.
4/25 Rocca, Larry
4/25 Tundo, Samuel
4/26 Biondo, Joe
4/27 Cipriano, Joseph
4/29 Vitale, Vincenzo
4/30 Gallo, Tony J.

May

5/4 Russo, Agostino
5/7 Agosta, Anthony Allan
5/8 Salvaggio, Alexandria
5/8 Picciche, Vincent
5/14 Calcaterra, Paul R.
5/14 DiCicco, Joseph
5/16 Velardo, Armand
5/17 Giarmarco, Julius H.
5/17 Paglia, Enzo
5/17 Rogensues, Gary
5/19 Varanelli, Jeffrey
5/23 Scalzi, Frank

ITALIAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEW MEMBERS 2023

Frank Agrusa – Agrusa Capital Management, LLC

Maryrose Angelo – Vegano Italiano

Alisha Congiolo – Biz iQology

Steven M. DiPiazza – The Motor Mall

Joseph Manzella, II – Eastman & Manzella Agency

Vincent Mercurio – Plante Moran

Leonard Palermino – Century Banquet Center

Richard L. Piccirilli – Foundation Authority

Giovanni Policicchio – Policicchio Building Company

Victoria Policicchio – Associate Council,
Skyline Champion Corporation

Noah Provenzano – Merrill Lynch

Thomas Salvati – The Salvati Insurance Group, Inc.

Douglas Shepherd – Judge, 41-A District Court

Eric Shepherd – Ihrie O'Brien Albright Kerakis

Lorenzo Spurrier – LM Property Management

TEAM SALVATI

Agency principal Tommy Salvati of The Salvati Insurance Group (TSiG) in Sterling Heights has a lot to be excited about these days. His agency was recently recognized as a *national* “Best and Brightest Companies to Work For” winner, agency profits are rising, and the agency’s building will soon get a new addition.

If you ask him what the key to TSiG’s success is, he’ll give full credit to the employee-centric culture he and his team have devel-

With so much connection to the community, the agency doesn’t have a marketing budget. All new business is referral and network based. TSiG boasts a retention rate far above the industry standards for both personal and commercial.

The Right Stuff

While so many agencies struggle to find and retain talent, this hasn’t been an issue for TSiG. Potential candidates are often identified through relationships developed via



oped. It all flows from the agency’s 6 Core Values:

1. Be Humbly Confident
2. Build Comradery
3. Customer Service Focused
4. Does What it Takes
5. Do the Right Thing
6. Have Fun!

These are the cornerstone guidelines that every employee learns upon arrival and from which all agency decisions and actions are based.

Casting a Wide Network

In addition to weekly meetings where team members report on goals and work together to solve any issues, TSiG is passionate about community outreach and it features largely in their playbook. All team members are encouraged to be involved in social groups and professional clubs, and staff time is routinely donated for volunteering.

community outreach. The agency’s strategic hiring practices place a strong emphasis on finding the right fit for their team culture and the right experience for the position, which may not necessarily include insurance experience.

Once on board, team members are given *5 Things to Obsess About*. This provides focus, helps them define goals and stay on track. In addition to on-the-job training, continuing education (like CIC and CISR) is highly valued and encouraged for all employees.

Culture Club

According to Tommy, it’s all about creating a buzz. People want to be around those who are doing good and work in an environment where enthusiasm and positive energy are palpable.

Work hard, play hard may best describe the tempo of the agency, with work/life balance a high priority and encompassing:



- A fun and comfortable environment.
- Flexible work hours.
- Work from home when circumstances warrant.
- Even take your kid to work day when childcare falls through.

Tommy also promotes activities designed to help nurture personal relationships among the team, including:

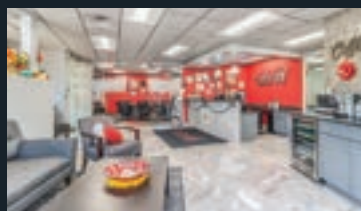
- Off-site team building excursions.
- Barbecue lunches on the patio.
- Occasional Friday afternoon refreshment breaks when things are winding down.

TSiG does what it takes to keep team members happy, thriving and productive. Clearly, Best and Brightest Companies to Work For® agrees. •

Michigan Agent is looking for agency stories. If your agency has something special to share with readers, please contact Big I Michigan Communications Director, Jennifer Burnett, at jburnett@michagent.org. If you have questions for Tommy Salvati, he can be reached at tsalvati@t-sig.biz.

About Best and Brightest

The Best and Brightest Companies to Work For® competition identifies and honors organizations that display a commitment to excellence in their human resource practices and employee enrichment. For more information, visit: www.thebestandbrightest.com



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Aaron Marentette



NewRez Home Loans

Aaron Marentette, Sales Manager
586-823-3472 Aaron.M@NewRez.com
www.QualifyWithAaron.com

Hello, my name is Aaron Marentette. I have been a member of IACCM for the past 6 years. I've served the last 2 years on the Board of Directors and this year I will be serving on the Board as Secretary. I've been the Co-Chairman of Festa Italiana since 2018 as well.

Professionally I have worked in the Banking and Finance Industry since 2008. I started my career as a Personal Banker and then Branch Manager with JP Morgan Chase. In 2012 I moved into the division of banking I was most passionate about, Mortgage Banking.

I've spent the past 8 years working with Caliber Home Loans which was purchased by and rebranded to NewRez in 2023. I pride myself on my customer service and have received over 500 - 5 star client reviews in the last 12 years. I offer a wide array of mortgage products such as Conventional, FHA, VA, USDA, construction financing, down Payment Assistance loans, and investor loans.

If I can be of any assistance to you or your loved ones for your home financing leads please feel free to call or text me at 586-823-3472.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Michael Ricciardello



I am Michael Ricciardello and I became a member of the IACCM in 2021. I am a Macomb County attorney and partner at DeMatteis & Ricciardello, PLLC. My partner, Anthony DeMatteis, and I specialize in Criminal Defense. My mother-in-law, Sandy Tornberg, is a board member of the Chamber and is who initially piqued my interest in this wonderful organization.

I moved to Southeast Michigan to attend Law School at University of Detroit Mercy from Jackson, MI. I have enjoyed learning about my Italian heritage and connecting with others who share my background. This opportunity was rarely afforded to me where I grew up. In fact, it is nearly impossible to find cannoli within thirty miles!

When I am not practicing law, I enjoy playing golf as much as my beautiful wife, Samantha, will allow me to! I look forward to many years of continued support of the Italian American Chamber of Commerce and getting to know many more members. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Best wishes in 2024!

Michael Ricciardello

Friends of Foster Kids Annual Christmas Wrapping Event

Thank you to all IACCM members who volunteered this year.

*Also a huge THANK YOU to Honorable Joseph Toia
and his wife Theresa for all their hard work year after year!*



November 1, 2024 • Palazzo Grande



Honorable Joseph Toia swearing in our newest members Brianna Todaro, Foundation Authority; Joseph Manzella II, Eastman & Manzella Agency; Lorenzo Spurrier, LM Property Management



Our host for the evening Domenic Belcastro, with Anthony Licata III



Honorable Joseph Toia with Andria Schmelzer, daughter of our beloved Jim Schmelzer. Andria will be carrying on her father's membership and his amazing photographic skills for the IACCM



Get your 50/50 tickets from Anthony before the HUGE drawing tonight!



Mike Divozzo and Tommy Bommarito

December 6, 2023 • Petruzzello's Elegant Banquet Center



After the board meeting, several Officers and Board of Directors pause for a quick photo.

Membership Chairman Charles Moran, Past President David Galli, President Mark Garagiola with our two new members, Noah



Chef Robert Gaglio of Italian Culinary Tours, speaks to the membership about his interesting Tuscany adventures.



Italian American Chamber of Commerce

2024 Installation of Officers & Board of Directors

Italian American Cultural Center • January 3, 2024



2024 Officers & Board of Directors

Standing L-R Alexandria Salvaggio, Peter Fuciarelli, Salvatore P. Ventimiglia, Vito Pianello, Joseph P. Ventimiglia, Leo Terzo, Greg Gagnon, Joseph Burke, Frank Coppola, Michel Tenaglia, Sandra Tornberg

Seated L-R Chairman of the Board Daniel Galli, 1st Vice President Joseph Divozzo, 2nd Vice President Philip J. Maniaci, President Charles J. Moran, Secretary Aaron Marentette, Treasurer Michael Locricchio, Financial Secretary Anthony Licata, III, Immediate Past President Mark Garagiola



2024 Officers

L-R Financial Secretary Anthony Licata, III, 2nd Vice President Philip J. Maniaci, President Charles J. Moran, 1st Vice President Joseph Divozzo, Secretary Aaron Marentette, Treasurer Michael Locricchio

Past President's in Attendance

Standing L-R Vito Pianello, Salvatore P. Ventimiglia, Ronald A. DiBartolomeo, David F. Galli, Daniel Galli

Seated L-R

Honorable Joseph Toia, Joseph P. Ventimiglia, Immediate Past President Mark Garagiola, Paul Calcaterra, Andrew Agosta, Charles Shermetaro, OD



Honorable Joseph Toia swearing in our newest members Victoria Policicchio, Skyline Champion Corporation, and her father Giovanni Policicchio of Policicchio Building Corporation



The last board meeting for 2023 Chairman Joe Ventimiglia and President Mark Garagiola



Honorable Joseph Toia reminds every one of the IACCM mission statement, and the responsibilities given to the 2024 Board of Directors



The swearing-in of the 2024 Officers & Board of Directors



New President Charles Moran presenting an award of appreciation to outgoing President Mark Garagiola



President Moran presenting to our longest member, Gino Esposito, a new "60 year" member badge



Past President Mark Garagiola presenting an appreciation award to outgoing Chairman of the Board Joseph Ventimiglia

The Italian American Chamber of Commerce of Michigan

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
Charles Moran

1ST VICE PRESIDENT
Joseph Divozzo

2ND VICE PRESIDENT
Philip J. Maniaci

SECRETARY
Aaron Marentette

FINANCIAL SECRETARY
Anthony Licata, III

TREASURER
Michel Locricchio

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN
Daniel Galli

PAST PRESIDENTS 2024
Joseph P. Ventimiglia
Salvatore P. Ventimiglia

TERMS ENDING 2024
Peter Fuciarelli
Alexandria Salvaggio
Sandra Tornberg

TERMS ENDING 2025
Greg Gagnon
Vito Pianello
Leo Salvatore Terzo

TERMS ENDING 2026
Joseph Burke
Frank Coppola
Michel Tenaglia

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Mark Garagiola

PAST PRESIDENTS COUNCIL

2022 Charles Shermetaro, OD
2020 Daniel Galli
2018 David A. Lazzara
2017 Vito Pianello
2015 David F. Galli
2014 Andrew Agosta
2013 Joseph P. Ventimiglia
2011 Honorable Joseph Toia
2010 Thomas Bommarito
2009 Ned R. Piccinini
2008 Ronald A. DiBartolomeo
2007 Salvatore P. Ventimiglia
2004 Paul Calcaterra
2000 Benedetto Marrocco
1999 Augustino Russo
1994 Angelo S. Lanni
1991 Thomas B. Lanni
1974 Joseph Grimaudo

Mission Statement

The Italian American Chamber of Commerce of Michigan

"To nurture an environment for business and professional growth inclusive of our Italian history and culture, that provides our members the commercial, educational, and charitable forums necessary to inspire pride throughout the Italian community, and to establish a relationship of trust and service between our members and our fellow citizens."

EVERYTHING YOU WANT IN A BUSINESS PARTNER. ESPECIALLY PARTNERSHIP.

Personal attention from local experts
still exists at Horizon Bank.



Our local team has the expertise to advise you on matters from complex financial issues to day-to-day cash management. Most importantly, we bring the experience you expect in a financial partner right here in your community. Just one of the many differences between other bankers and your local Horizon Advisors.

Joseph DiCicco
VP, Sr. Commercial Loan Officer
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