

# **Every October is National**

## **Italian American Heritage and Culture Month**

In the five centuries since Christopher Columbus, a son of Genoa, Italy, first set sail across the Atlantic Ocean and discovered the Americas, countless individuals have followed the course he charted to seek a new life in America. Since that time, generations of Italian Americans have helped shape our society and steer the course of our history. During Italian American Heritage and Culture Month, we recognize the rich heritage of Americans of Italian descent and celebrate their immeasurable contributions to our Nation.

Bound by enduring values of faith and family, Italian Americans have flourished in all areas of our public and economic life while preserving their proud Italian traditions. Upon arrival in the United States, the Italian American community faced social and religious discrimination. Yet, Italian Americans have persevered with hope and hard work to reach for the American dream and helped build our great country. As proud service members, they have also defended the liberty and integrity of the United States since and including the Revolutionary War.

Today, the legacy of these immigrants is found in the millions of American men, women, and children of Italian descent who strengthen and enrich our country. Italian Americans operate thriving businesses, teach our children, serve at all levels of government, and succeed in all occupations and professions. Drawing on the courage and principles of their forebears, they lead in every facet of American life, dedicating their knowledge and skills to the growth of our country with their strong Italian Work Ethic.

Over 5.4 million Italians immigrated to the United States between 1776 and 1992. Today there are over 26 million Americans of Italian descent in the United States. Our country and two continents was even named after an Italian, the explorer and geographer Amerigo Vespucci.

Italian heritage is expressed in many ways. It's in the beautiful language that travelled with Italians to America. It's in the music played at celebrations and opera sung on stage. It is in the fine art that is admired in galleries. It's also in the Italian meals we cook, filled with vibrant flavors and spices that recall the tastes of Italy. The unwavering bond and strong foundation have kept not only the community, but the vibrancy of Italian Culture alive. It is a tribute in honor of those who have shaped the beauty of art, music, food, and literature, and shared these gifts with this nation.