Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America/ New York State Commission for Social Justice

Arthur Spera, OSDIA/NYS President
Eleanor Jobbagy, OSDIA/NYS CSJ Chairperson

NEW YORK STATE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

PROUDLY SPONSORS

"THE JOHN DABBENE ITALIAN HERITAGE ESSAY CONTEST"

To: NYS Lodge Presidents and Lodge Members

If you are a member in good standing in one of our local lodges and have a child, grandchild, niece or nephew who will be in grades 7 through 12 in September 2026, that child is eligible to enter our **"John Dabbene Italian Heritage Essay Contest."**

The goal of this essay contest is to help students better understand their Italian heritage and culture. To that end, we hope that as parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, you will sponsor and encourage a family member to participate. The interaction between you and the student may present an opportunity to further enhance your family's knowledge of your Italian heritage.

A winner will be chosen from each district throughout the State from each grade category. Each winner will receive a $200 award for his or her essay.

Sponsoring lodge presidents will be responsible for validating their member's standing within the lodge by signing the Application form.

Accompanying this letter is the Application form. Please read it carefully and comply with the requirements.

All essays must be mailed and RECEIVED by SEPTEMBER 15, 2026. Mail to:

Geraldine Iannello Graham, Chairperson
John Dabbene Italian Heritage Essay Contest
53 Brooksite Drive
Smithtown, NY 11787

Questions may be emailed to geraldine@sellarolodge.org

NYS Commission for Social Justice (CSJ) John Dabbene Italian Heritage Essay Contest

Student's Name: _____ Grade:_____

Student's Address & phone no._____

Sponsor's Lodge & District _____

President's Name & Signature _____

Sponsor's Name (Print)_____

Sponsor's Signature _____

"WHAT MY ITALIAN HERITAGE MEANS TO ME" - John Dabbene Italian Heritage Essay Contest

Immigrants from every part of the world have come to America in search of new opportunities. These ancestors are an important part of our heritage and forming our traditions and culture. Your family life has been influenced by those who came to America.

Assignment: Who in your family has had the greatest influence with regard to your Italian heritage? For this essay you will be writing about an Italian family member who has made an impact in your life and has influenced your knowledge of Italian Heritage and Culture.

***You must include*:**

- Information about your Italian heritage and origin: Where in Italy is your family from? What can you tell us about this area? Who came to America and why?
- Which member of your Italian family has influenced you the most about your heritage? Describe this person and how he/she has impacted your life. ? Why did you choose him/her?
- In addition to food, what other values or traditions has he/she passed on to you and your family?
- Personal stories or experiences that you may have had with this person: How has this person helped you to understand and appreciate your Italian heritage?

Guidelines Checklist:

- Write a story with a minimum **of *250 words*** on the above topic. **Essays will not be accepted from previous winners.**
- For full credit include **at least 4 authentic visuals** that represent your family heritage (copies/photos of old pictures, personal documents or objects, etc.). **Label each visual and describe what this item(s) is in your essay.**
- Submit a signed attestation of the authenticity of your included visuals. This must be signed by an adult family member. (Form included)
- The completed assignment **must be typed** *(handwritten submission will not be accepted)* and submitted on time in order to be considered for the contest. (**Deadline: September 15, 2026**) A copy of the scoring rubric for the contest is attached.

All essays and accompanying material must be RECEIVED by September 15, 2026 Please send all material to:

Geraldine Iannello Graham,
Chairperson / John Dabbene Essay Contest
53 Brooksite Drive, Smithtown NY 11787
(geraldine@sellarolodge.org)

JOHN DABBENE ITALIAN HERITAGE ESSAY CONTEST

ATTESTATION OF AUTHENTICITY

Student's Name: _____

This document must be submitted with your essay to confirm that your included visuals are authentic. This must be signed by an adult member of your family who can verify the validity of each photo. ***Please, only submit photos of actual artifacts that pertain to your essay.***

If not submitted you will lose points.

Remember to review the rubric for point value for each authentic visual submitted.

Thank you.

To: John Dabbene Essay Contest committee members

I, _____ (print name) do attest that all of the visuals that were submitted with this essay are true and authentic.

Signature: _____

Relationship to student: _____

NYS Commission for Social Justice (CSJ) John Dabbene Italian Heritage Essay Contest

SCORING RUBRIC FOR JOHN DABBENE ESSAY CONTEST **(MAXIMUM SCORE = 24 POINTS)**

After judges have read and scored each essay, a total of 75 points (minimum) is necessary to qualify for the contest.

	4	3	2	1
ITALIAN HERITAGE	Very informative and well organized - many details given on the topic – clear and focused	Somewhat informative and organized - more details needed pertaining to the topic	Limited information given and many details were vague and unnecessary	Not enough information given - confusing and poorly organized
DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY MEMBER	Very informative and well organized - many details given on the topic – clear and focused	Somewhat informative and organized - more details needed pertaining to the topic	Limited information given and many details were vague and unnecessary	Not enough information given - confusing and poorly organized
VALUES AND TRADITIONS AND PERSONAL STORIES OR EXPERIENCES	Very informative and well organized - many details given on the topic – clear and focused	Somewhat informative and organized - more details needed pertaining to the topic	Limited information given and many details were vague and unnecessary	Not enough information given - confusing and poorly organized
GRAMMAR AND USAGE	Virtually no spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors - well written	A few spelling and punctuation mistakes and minor grammatical errors	A number of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors – poorly written	So many punctuation and grammatical errors that interfere with comprehension
VISUAL	Includes at least 4 authentic visuals that pertain to the topic	Includes 3 authentic visuals that pertain to the topic	Includes 2 authentic visuals that pertains to the topic	**No visuals included** **1 visual included** **0 points**
WORD COUNT	250 or more words	At least 225 words	At least 200 words	Below 200 words

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

SCORE: _____ COMMENTS: _____