



ITALIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP FORUM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of Giovanni da Verrazzano by Italian American Leadership Forum (IALF)**

**Washington D.C., April 23, 2024** – The Board of Directors of the Italian American Leadership Forum (IALF), founded in 2023, coordinated a wreath-laying ceremony on April 17, 2024, at the Giovanni da Verrazzano Statue in New York City's Battery Park to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the arrival of **Giovanni da Verrazzano**, an Italian navigator and explorer who traveled under the flag of France in his voyages across the Atlantic.

Opening remarks were provided by **Angelo Vivolo**, former President of the Columbus Citizens Foundation, whose efforts were instrumental in coordinating the event. Also, in attendance and offering words with regard to the celebration were New York State Governor **Kathy Hochul**, Consul General of Italy to New York **Fabrizio Di Michele**, Consull General of France in New York **Laurent Brunet** and **Susan Donoghue**, Commissioner, New York City Parks. Additional attendees included representatives from various regions of Italy and Italian-American organizations.

**Michael G. Polo**, chair of the IALF and National President of the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America (OSDIA), provided the closing remarks on behalf of the IALF and leadership on hand from the other respective organizations: the Columbus Citizens Foundation (CCF), the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), the National Organization of Italian American Women (NOIAW), and UNICO National.

Giovanni da Verrazzano hailed from Florence and lived from 1485 and 1528. He is best known for being the first European to explore the Atlantic coast of North America between the Carolinas and Newfoundland. Among his honors is the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, which opened in 1964, and spans a tidal straight that connects New York Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean, connecting Brooklyn to Staten Island.

The celebrations started with an early morning ferry ride from Battery Park on the Staten Island Ferry, led by the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of New York, as well as a stop at Borough Hall, Staten Island, whose murals depict Verrazzano's discovery. Later in the evening, NIAF hosted the US Premiere of Giovanni Da Verrazzano's documentary at the Paley Center for Media.

The Italian American Leadership Forum (IALF) is an association of major Italian American organizations representing the needs of an estimated 18 million Americans of Italian heritage. The IALF serves as a mechanism to discuss, debate and act on the most important public policy issues facing our community. The IALF is a coordinative

### **FOUNDING ORGANIZATIONS**

Columbus Citizens Foundation  
National Italian American Foundation  
National Organization of Italian American Women  
Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, Supreme Lodge  
Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, Foundation  
Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, Commission for Social Justice  
UNICO National  
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body that encourages, supports and assists the membership to build consensus and advance shared goals. Learn more and apply to join as an associate organization on IALF's website: [IALForum.org](http://IALForum.org).

Click [here](#) to learn more about the history of Giovanni da Verrazzano.

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