

# ST. ANTHONY'S FEAST BULLETIN BOARD

*We recently asked Tony Ditizio, one of the founders, to take us back to the beginnings of St. Anthony's Feast. He told us this great story, which he dedicates to the memory of his wife, Marilyn:*



On a Thursday night back 50 years ago, my wife, **Marilyn ("Chickie") Ditizio**, came home from a Rosary Altar Society meeting and told me that she had volunteered both of us to start a Feast in honor of St. Anthony to bring additional funds into our Church. I said, "What do we know about running a Feast?" She insisted that St. Anthony would guide us, that we could do it, and so we did.

We decided that it would be a one-day event from 4 PM to 10 PM on the Saturday closest to St. Anthony's Feast day, June 13<sup>th</sup>. We'd make it a community event open to all with Parishioners and neighbors to attend. We asked the men from the Knights of Columbus and the Ladies from the Rosary Altar Society and anyone else that felt they had time to devote to help us with the endeavor.

We were a very close group of friends back then. And, it did not take long before many of them stepped to the plate to help. **Lou Trapani** volunteered to build the booths. **Al Albanese** would organize the Knights to string the lights. **Pat Hynes** would handle a booth for the Statue of St. Anthony. **Joe Diresta** would build some games for the kids. **Gus Antonian** donated the toys as prizes for the kids to win. My family and I would handle the sausage booth. **The Albanese family** assisted me, and their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren have kept the tradition going for fifty years.

**Pat McCaul** and **Pat Petrocelli** would be in the Hot Dog and Hamburger booth. They too are still manning it with their family. **Rose Romano** and **June Guerin** would handle the Eggplant booth. **Ann Santillo** made all the dough for the Zeppole. My wife and I along with a small committee began lining up suppliers. Capri Pizza offered to make the pizza. **Julia Albanese** contacted a friend that had a small sausage business who agreed to donate back all the money we spent on sausage. I had a contact in the Brooklyn Terminal market where I could buy all the eggplant, peppers and onions at wholesale pricing.

I had to ask **Father John Drab**, our Pastor at that time, for \$200 to pay for the supplies we needed. He had to think long and hard before he wrote the check. \$200 dollars was a lot of money back then! Yes, St. Anthony was truly guiding us. And, before long everything was in place.

We had no idea how many people would attend, after all this was the first Feast to be held on the South Shore of Long Island! So, erring on the side of caution, I purchased a minimum amount of food. We prayed for good weather, just like we have done every year for the past 50 years.

The week of the Feast arrived and I delivered the food and supplies to the homes of the volunteers who had agreed to do the cooking.

**Mrs. LaMarca** sliced, cooked and prepared the bushel of eggplant all by herself. We had hamburgers from Janowski's. We also had a booth of Italian candies and nuts.

At a meeting just before the Feast, **Annette Muro** presented a stole she had crocheted to put around the statue of St. Anthony. The Pastor wanted to know why we wanted to put a coat around the Statue. "Not a coat, a stole! Like a scarf" Father Drab still did not understand the purpose. Then my wife explained "People who love St. Anthony will pin money to the stole." When we collected over \$1,100 dollars, the Pastor understood! The following year, he was the first to ask Marilyn if she was putting the stole on the statue of St. Anthony again.

When Feast Day finally arrived, I went to the homes and picked up all the food the volunteers had cooked and delivered it to the various booths. At 4 PM Fr. Drab started the Feast with a prayer.

The booths opened and much to our surprise by 5 PM, we were already running out of food! I ran to every supermarket in the area buying whatever food I could get... franks, burgers, chopped meat, sausage, bread, anything I could get my hands on that we could sell.

Needless to say, the first Feast was an instant success!!

Over the next few years, by the grace of God, the event grew and grew. From one night, it went to two, then three and eventually, four nights. A few years later we added entertainment, then games and soon amusement rides. Attendance grew from a hundred or so to our current attendance of over 10,000 parishioners, neighbors and their families. In 2018 over 500 volunteers donated their time to make this wonderful celebration of our faith community a success.

It all started because a few parishioners wanted to help raise some money for their Parish.

... In closing I would like to say "Thank You" to all those first volunteers who worked so hard preparing the food and running the booths... and to all the subsequent volunteers who continue the tradition and make the Feast a huge success it is.

I would also like to thank those people who have over the last 50 years served as Chairpersons of the event. The list is to the best of my knowledge and not in any particular order (My apologies if I missed anyone. It was not intentional, just a lapse of memory):

**Marilyn & Tony Ditizio, Pat Petrocelli, Randy Perna, Peg Duffy, Liz Graf, Frank Freaney, Al Larsen,** and our current Chair, **John Fellin**.

Finally, I would like to thank the countless number of volunteers who over the past five decades have tirelessly donated their time and money to continue this wonderful tradition.

**Tony Ditizio**  
Co-Founder of St. Anthony's Feast

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