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## ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CLUB OF HUNTERDON COUNTY

### *September 2012 Meeting Program:*

#### **Meet Mark Di Ionno**

Award winning Star Ledger columnist Mark Di Ionno will talk about his new novel, ***The Last Newspaperman*** on Tuesday, September 18 at the monthly meeting of the Italian American Heritage Club. A book signing will follow. Although Di Ionno's new book is fiction, *The Last Newspaperman* explores the real roots of tabloid journalism in the 1920s and 30s where it was born, ***in New Jersey!*** He will discuss how the events described in the book laid the foundation for the crime-saturated and celebrity-obsessed media we have today.



The novel's fictional protagonist is Frederick Haines, a one-time star tabloid reporter for the New York Daily Mirror now nearing the end of his life. A young reporter on assignment listens with rapt attention as Haines gives him the back stories on the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, the Hindenburg disaster, the deadly Morro Castle cruise ship fire, and the hysteria that followed Orson Welles's "War of the Worlds" broadcast.

"While much of the action is set in New Jersey in the 1930's, *The Last Newspaperman* is not strictly a historical novel," Di Ionno said. "My goal was to connect the past with the contemporary, sensationalist media that dominates the airwaves, newsstands, and internet."

Mark Di Ionno is very proud of his strong Italian family background and heritage, which has been reflected in his columns for The Star-Ledger. He has also written extensively about how the media stereotypes Italian Americans.

Di Ionno is a lifetime newspaperman and a four-time winner of the New Jersey Press Association's first-place award for column writing. In addition to his twice-weekly column in The Star-Ledger, his "Mark in the Morning" online column appears daily on nj.com.

His pieces have followed the most controversial Garden State stories including in recent years the Dharun Ravi trial and Governor James McGreevey's resignation, both having fueled a tabloid frenzy. Besides his work as columnist and author, he is also an adjunct professor of journalism at his alma-mater Rutgers Newark, the State University of New Jersey. He resides in Mountain Lakes, NJ with his children.



Di Ionno is the author of three award-winning nonfiction books. *New Jersey's Coastal Heritage* and *A Guide to New Jersey's Revolutionary War Trail* won the New Jersey Academic Alliance Award, which is judged by a consortium of librarians and historians. *Backroads, New Jersey* was named among the most notable New Jersey books (1995–2005) by the New Jersey Center for the Book.

Keeping our Pride, Celebrating our Culture, Remembering our Past