

## **A Tragedy Without Borders. Solidarity from New York**

O. C. (April 09, 2009)



Two days after the Abruzzo earthquake, members of the Italian American caucus of the New York City Council call upon everybody, regardless of their ethnic background, to assist with the relief effort

Councilmen Tony Avella and Vincent Gentile called a press conference on the steps of City Hall on May 8 to announce their Italian Earthquake Relief Effort. They were joined by the Consul General of Italy Francesco Maria Talò and exponents of the Italian American community. The President and CEO of the Columbia Association Joseph Guagliardo, who had just undergone surgery and was still convalescent, came straight from the hospital to offer the Italian Consul General a check of \$5000.



Also speaking at the conference were NYS OSIA Trustee John Fratta, co-chair of the Disaster Relief Committee, Mario Faulisi, President of the Columbus Day Foundation of Howard Beach, and Frank P. Gulluscio, who was recently a candidate for NYC Council 32nd District. Actress, producer and writer Valerie Smaldone also made her appearance at the press conference.

“We as New Yorkers, a city with a very significant Italian American population are reaching out to everyone for help,” said Avella, the president of the caucus, who also pointed out that his message is directed to all people of New York, not just to Italian Americans. “This is really a human tragedy,” added Gentile, “a tragedy that everybody, regardless of national origin, can relate to.” He recalled that back in 2001, the residents of L’Aquila—the capital city of the Abruzzo region that is now virtually destroyed—collected \$5000 to send to New York in the hope that they could help our city to recover after 9/11. It is now time to show our gratitude, Gentile urged. All the other exponents of the Italian American community echoed the same sentiments of solidarity across ethnic borders.

Italy’s Consul General Talò thanked the organizers of the relief effort for showing so vividly that “we have so many friends in New York, a city where Italians have always felt at home.” He stressed that the emergency assistance in Italy is being very efficient at the present moment. “Italians learned a lot from so many natural disasters and, as you probably know, today the Italian emergency management system is one of the best organized in the world, as all experts recognize.” So for the moment, the Consul General added, it looks like there is no need for emergency assistance. But in the near future, when the reconstruction begins, help will be very welcome and appreciated. “It is very important to know that we have the support of organizations like yours.”

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