Introducing “NY-NJ Italian Cultural Bridge”

A generous donation provided by Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr. Founder and President of the Coccia Foundation, served as the ‘seed money’ to kick off the development of a network of key academic and cultural organizations which would ultimately evolve into the “NY-NJ Italian Cultural Bridge.” Serving the larger strategic objective of strengthening the relationship between the Consulate General of Italy in New York and the Consulate of Italy in Newark, this partnership with the Italian Cultural Institute was designed to facilitate the sharing of cultural exhibits and programs outside of Manhattan, especially in New Jersey.

The Coccia Foundation’s contribution became the first step in the formal construction of this ground-breaking New Jersey-based cultural enterprise. As emphasized by Chair Andrea Barbaria, Consul of Italy in Newark, “It is important to underline the fact that this structure is the first of its kind specifically created to establish a linkage between the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di New York and New Jersey cultural institutions.”

Establishing a Culture Bridge between New York and New Jersey Consulates and the Coccia Foundation.

Our new Consul in Newark is energetically following in the footsteps of Consul General of Italy in New York, Min. Francesco Maria Talo’, who has been tireless in his outreach activities to Italian and Italian American communities throughout New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

What, precisely, is the mission of this new cultural entity? To quote from the First and Second Articles of the newly-drafted Statute establishing the NY-NJ ICB, soon to be posted on the website of the Consulate of Italy in Newark:(www.consnearnk.esteri.it)

“The New York - New Jersey Italian Cultural Bridge (NY-NJ ICB) was created, under the auspices of the Italian Consulate of Newark, to foster synergies between the Italian Cultural Institute of New York and prominent institutions across the cultural landscape of New Jersey. Its mission is to promote and facilitate Italian cultural exchange between New York and New Jersey [con lo scopo di promuovere e veicolare l’interscambio riguardante la cultura italiana]”

(Continued on page 4)
Looking Ahead …..  Continued Expansion & Growth

If you read my last “Looking Ahead” column this past summer, you are already familiar with the significant changes that we at the Coccia Foundation have been making since the start of 2008.

In addition to adding dynamic new individuals to our Board of Trustees and our Executive Committee, we have also expanded the scope of our ‘Amici della Cultura Italiana’ umbrella organization (see page 5 for story and more information). 2008 also saw the restructuring of the Coccia Foundation, both on the internet and in our office, as well as the creation of partnerships with other forward-thinking Italian organizations and groups that share our goals, the inception of the exciting new Sponsored Scholarship Program to benefit students, the release of a new Italian anthem (see back cover for story and more information), and many successful events to benefit students and raise funds for the continuation of our mission.

As this year comes to a close, I am celebrating the progress that our organization has made in the past year and looking forward to all that we have yet to accomplish.

I would also like to announce the creation of the Coccia Foundation’s new motto, “PASSING THE TORCH”. Our active members and supporters may have already begun to hear this phrase over the past several months, as my wife Elda and I believe that it truly encompasses our mission and our wishes for our organization. While the torch that we strive to pass symbolizes the first image that our ancestors viewed as they arrived on the shores of America for the first time – the torch carried by the Statue of Liberty – it also represents a much more significant concept. The torch – burning brightly – also symbolizes the rich culture, history, and values of Italy and its people. With every event that we host, with every student that we support, with every program we sponsor, and with every dollar that we raise, the torch is passed to another young individual. And with your continued help and support, the light of the torch will never die.

“TANTE GRAZIE”
To our supporters and volunteers for their generous contribution of funds and time in support of our mission to—
“PASSING THE TORCH”

Coccia Foundation
Founded 1994
“Preserving Italian Culture”
Elda M. Coccia
Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr.
Founders

Trustees/Executive Board
Elda M. Coccia
Elisa Coccia
Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr.
Joseph Coccia, III
Ralph A. Contini, CPA
Thomas Daidone
Genevieve Coccia Nicastro

Executive Board
Francis Bimonte, Sr.
Barbara Peirano
Phil Sergio

Honorary Members
Cav. Paul DiGaetano
Cav. N. Larry Paragano

Editor
Barbara Peirano, BA, MS

Copy Editors
Rachele D’Emidio Bennett
Kristen Kettelhut

Writers
Rachele D’Emidio Bennett
Elisa Coccia
Anthony DiPerno
Joe De Felice
Danielle McCartan
Dr. Mary Ann Re
Phil Sergio

Visual Assistant
Vincent Coccia

Design by Man-Hon Kam

Corrections, Suggestions, Additions, Terminations, or Email Updates:
Please call the Foundation’s Office at (201) 712-1010 or Email the Editor at barbarapeirano@cocciafoundation.org

“Passing the Torch”
On Friday, October 17, 2008, the members of Il Circolo Italiano, the Italian Club at Ramapo College, and Dr. Rosetta D’Angelo were selected to attend the 33rd annual National Italian American Foundation convention and gala in Washington D.C. The weekend was full of educational and motivating conferences and opportunities to mingle with the most prominent and important Italian Americans today.

On Friday night, NIAF hosted a “Salute to Sinatra Night” in the main ballroom of the Hilton Washington & Towers Hotel. The event was speckled with appearances from famous Italians and Italian Americans including a performance by contemporary Italian Billboard top world music singer, Patrizio Buanne. At the conclusion of the event, there was a moving musical video salute and toast to one of the most iconic Italian American, “ol’ blue eyes”, Frank Sinatra. For me, the highlight of my weekend occurred on this night. A huge New York Yankee fan since I was six years old, I was starstruck when I met baseball legend Lawrence Peter “Yogi” Berra.

On Saturday afternoon, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the first Italian American to hold that position, Nancy Pelosi, was featured in an interview with television political analyst Sam Donaldson and had a book signing shortly thereafter. During the interview, Nancy Pelosi touched on everything from the current political campaigns of Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain to her favorite Italian dish. To this, she replied enthusiastically, “all of them!”

Also on Saturday afternoon, Dr. Margaret Cuomo, daughter of former governor of New York Mario Cuomo, delivered an inspirational presentation to a large and attentive audience about the importance of preserving the Italian language in American schools. She has a full-fledged campaign advocating this cause and is determined not to let Italian become archaic in schools. She is raising awareness and money in support of the Advanced Placement Italian language exam in high schools across the country to support her cause.

Saturday night boasted NIAF’s main gala, an over-the-top formal dinner-dance. It was here where the executive members of Il Circolo Italiano (Danielle McCartan, Cristina Bandino, Matt Sullivan, Briana Sarapochillo, Jacque Cislo, Christina Luzzi, and Angelina Aucello) and Dr. Rosetta D’Angelo met and took pictures with legendary celebrities and important political figures including: Rudy Giuliani, Gina Lollobrigida, Yogi Berra, and Tom Dreesen.

The National Italian American Foundation’s convention and gala were unforgettable events that the members of Il Circolo Italiano experienced, and we would especially like to thank Joseph Coccia, Jr., founder of the Coccia Foundation, and Dr. Rosetta D’Angelo, professor of Italian, for their continuing support and commitment to the students of Italian at Ramapo College. The convention and gala demonstrated the sense of togetherness and pride that Italian Americans exhibit in the United States of America. As host Tom Dressen said to a crowd of over one thousand people in his opening remarks at Friday night’s Salute to the Martini, “Us Italian Americans: we’re all family”.

Danielle McCartan
Building a Bridge….

(Continued from page 1)
tra lo Stato di New York e lo Stato del New Jersey.

The purpose of the NY-NJ ICB is to guarantee maximum exposure to high profile products of Italian culture within the consular jurisdictions and to ensure the best allocation of financial resources at the disposal of the participating institutions.

Following are the names and affiliations of the Officers and Board members, all of whom are serving on a voluntary and autonomous basis, united in pursuit of a shared goal:

President: Dott. Renato Miracco, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute (l’Istituto Italiano di Cultura di New York)
Chair: Dott. Andrea Barbaria, Consul of Italy in Newark

Board Members:
Dr. Pietro Frassica (Princeton University & Dorothea’s House-Casa di Cultura Italiana)
Prof. Carla Mastropierro (Drew University & Italian Educational & Cultural Center–Museum of Arts at Casa Colombo)
Dr. Mary Ann Re (Montclair State University & Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America)
Dr. Gabriella Romani (Seton Hall University & Alberto Italian Studies Institute)
Dr. Laura Sanguinetti White (Rutgers University & NJ Italian & Italian American Heritage Commission)

The Consul General in New York and the Consul in New Jersey are both supported by and benefit from the services provided by the Italian Cultural Institute (Istituto Italiano di Cultura), the Italian Trade Commission (ICE), the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) and the Office of Education (Ufficio Scolastico). The NY-NJ ICB demonstrates most vividly a dynamic partnership between NJ and the cultural arm of this Italian consular ‘system.’

As Consul Barbaria noted, “A bridge must be supported by a solid foundation on both shores—we have a solid rock in New Jersey,” which boasts many active and dedicated cultural institutions—a demonstrable sign of the vitality of the Italian and Italian American community throughout the state. “Without such a solid and receptive basis, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to build a bridge—literal or metaphorical.”

As he continued, “I think the NY-NJ Italian Cultural Bridge is going to enable these already solid institutions to be even more active and more conscious of what Italian culture has to offer—what’s going on today in Italy….The NY-NJ ICB is an excellent vehicle for a more updated and contemporary view of the intellectual and cultural panorama that is Italian culture today.”

To conclude, as eloquently stated by “Bridge” member, Dr. Gabriella Romani, “This is an unprecedented opportunity for local institutions to create a network of cultural activities which in unison will resonate with the larger community of Italophiles and, ultimately, enhance the understanding of the varied and rich cultural patrimony of Italy.”

We encourage you to stay tuned for announcements of upcoming cultural events, beginning in the first quarter of 2009, which will be offered to the community under the auspices of the Consulate in Newark, the Italian Cultural Institute in Manhattan, and the participating entities that now form this exciting ground-breaking venture, the NY—NJ Italian Cultural Bridge!

by Mary Ann Re. Director
Coccia Institute at MSU

Networking with Other Organizations


A Special Thank You

Receiving a certificate of thanks for their work on behalf of the Coccia Foundation.
East Coast Students Become Our ‘Amici’

With a focus that centers on education, awareness, and pride, the Coccia Foundation’s commitment to youth and university students is intrinsic to our mission and our many goals. As the sponsor of many student-run Italian clubs under the umbrella designation of “Amici della Cultura Italiana,” we fulfill our commitment to young people of all ethnicities who have a passion for the heritage, culture, language, and people of Italy. In the past several months, new “Amici della Cultura Italiana” groups have formed and are already beginning to thrive in universities and colleges throughout the east coast. Even now, seven more Italian clubs are expressing interest in becoming our “Amici” as well.

“Amici della Cultura Italiana” groups enjoy many benefits as a result of being associated with the Coccia Foundation. Our organization recognizes the student members’ commitment to the preservation of Italian culture and heritage in the United States by providing students with scholarship opportunities, matching funds for various initiatives, and supporting study abroad programs. In addition, we provide financial support for cultural events including culinary and arts programs, Italian-themed field trips, and Italian festivals. Above all, the Coccia Foundation’s “Amici” groups encourage students to meet others who share their love of all things Italian and to strengthen their ties to Italy and its culture. Our organization also aids student “Amici” officers in hosting annual events that bring together members from all clubs, including our trip to the National Italian American Foundation’s convention weekend and gala held in Washington, DC in October.

Representatives from “Amici” groups meet twice per semester to share ideas, organize collaborative events, and enjoy each other’s company. “Amici” groups are already established at the following universities and colleges.

**Communicating in Italian…**
Words, Phrases, etc.
Try mastering some of these daily.

---

**Italian word:** scivolare (she-vol-ar-ay)
**English translation:** to slip (slide)
**Part of speech:** verb

**Example sentence**
Italian: L’anziana signora scivolò sul marciapiede coperto di ghiaccio.
English: The elderly lady slipped on the ice-covered sidewalk.

**Italian word:** davanti (dah-vahn-tee)
**English translation:** in front
**Part of speech:** adverb

**Example sentence**
Italian: Siediti davanti, così puoi vedere il panorama.
English: Sit in front, so you can see the view.

**Italian word:** magro (mah-grow)
**English translation:** skinny
**Part of speech:** adjective

**Example sentence**
Italian: Un bambino troppo magro può avere problemi di salute.
English: A child that is too skinny can have health problems.

Other usages:
Latte magro = Skimmed milk
Carne Magra = Lean meat
Formaggio magro = Low-fat cheese
Raccolta magro = Poor harvest

---

Joe De Felice

“PASSING THE TORCH” Help us by organizing an “Amici della Cultura Italiana” group at your school, contact the Coccia Foundation to find out how to get started.
Additional Scholarship Recipients

2008 Scholarship Winners to Advance Italian Studies

One of the most important facets of the Coccia Foundation’s mission to preserve and perpetuate Italian culture and heritage centers on education, an entity that our founders, Trustees, and Executive Board believe is vital to both success and progress. In an effort to bolster the knowledge, worldliness, and skilled expertise of emerging adults who will soon begin their careers in various fields, the Coccia Foundation annually dedicates a significant percentage of its funds for scholarships.

“I am proud to say that this year was one of our greatest achievements in terms of our various scholarship drives,” says Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr. “In addition to establishing and executing the new Sponsored Scholarship program, called ‘CIRCOLO dei AMICI’, the Coccia Foundation, also had the pleasure of granting a record number of scholarships to deserving students in nine universities.”

The Italian community in America was recently jolted to awareness about the decline of Italian teachers in this country. Our schools are also in desperate need of books and teaching tools on the subjects of Italian language, history, and culture. The nationwide appeal for accomplished educators and learning materials in all fields relating to Italian studies is augmented by an even greater obstacle – our high schools are now facing the elimination of the Italian Advanced Placement program, a movement that the Coccia Foundation will continue to contest in the coming year.

“Amidst the adversity that is currently confronting young scholars of all things Italian, I believe that our support of these students is all the more necessary and even more imperative,” Cav. Coccia notes.

In keeping with Coccia Foundation’s continued sense of duty in “PASSING THE TORCH” to the younger generations, the following students also received scholarships through the organization in 2008.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY - NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ
Kelly Porter and Jaime Lynn Bernice, Minors in Italian and active members of the Rutgers Italian Club, were recipients of $1,000 each to study abroad in Urbino, Italy.

Kathleen La Penta and Johanna Wagner, Ph.D. candidates and future teachers of Italian, were recipients of $1,000 each from the Clementina and Joseph Coccia, Sr. Sponsored Scholarship.

Tiziana Briscese and Giovanna Mangiola, students at the World Languages Institute at Rutgers in pursuit of Masters in Education, were recipients of $1,000 each from the Anna and Angelo Soriano Sponsored Scholarship.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY – MONTCLAIR, NJ
Larisa Vitaliti was the recipient of the $2,000 Marie Manzetti Sponsored Scholarship to study abroad in Sicily.

Kristin Bett and Kaitlin Donahue, were recipients of $750 and $1,250 respectively, from the Coccia Foundation to study abroad in Sicily.

Marisa Bianco, Robert Campana, and Rosa Russo, were recipients of the Saddle Brook UNICO Excellence in Italian Scholarship through the support of the Coccia Foundation.

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY – SOUTH ORANGE, NJ
Antonio Totino, Class of ’09 studying Education and Italian Language and Literature was the recipient of the $2,000 Nicastro Family Sponsored Scholarship.

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE – VALHALLA, NY
Sergio Serratto, active member of WCC’s II Club Italiano was the recipient of $2,000 from the Coccia Foundation to study abroad in Italy.

FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY - MADISON, NJ
Briana Zyglado, Education Major, student of the Italian language, and active member of FDU’s Italian club P.I.S.A., was the recipient of the $2,000 Bimonte Family Sponsored Scholarship.

FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY - TEANECK, NJ
Christina Charuk and Christina Sarrafian were recipients of $2,000 and $1,000 respectively to study abroad in Italy.

FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AT FLORHAM, NJ
Ashley Hendricks and Lauren Iacono were recipients of $1,000 and $2,000 respectively to study abroad in Italy.

DREW UNIVERSITY – MADISON, NJ
Toni Anne Corsi was the recipient of $2,000 to study abroad in Italy.

CONGRATULATIONS and SALUTE to all of our 2008 scholarship winners!!
Coccia Foundation Launches New Initiative

Sponsored Scholarships to Benefit Future Italian Community Leaders

SADDLE BROOK, NJ – After launching its new Sponsored Scholarship program just months ago, the Coccia Foundation is already planning to increase the scope of the new initiative that benefits students pursuing Italian studies at the university level. The Coccia Foundation Sponsored Scholarships were created to address the increasingly urgent need for teachers of Italian in the United States.

“The new scholarship program is designed specifically to aid students who wish to further their higher education in pursuit of teaching careers. Whether these young people plan to teach the Italian language or focus on Italian culture and history, we have chosen to help them achieve their goals and in turn, help in ‘PASSING THE TORCH’ to the future generations that they will educate,” says Cav. Joseph Coccia Jr., Founder of the Coccia Foundation.

Cav. Coccia and the Trustees and Officers of the Coccia Foundation are now actively recruiting supporters of the Italian community, as well as families, businesses, and friends of the organization, to join in its drive to aid the education of future Italian teachers. All are invited to participate by creating a Sponsored Scholarship in the minimum of $2,000 to be given annually to a deserving student studying at the university of the benefactor’s choice. The sponsors are also asked to name their scholarship in memory of a loved one, with homage to their Italian family, as a testament to an individual who championed the value of education, or according to their own personal wishes.

Having begun this exciting new initiative with three Sponsored Scholarships, the Coccia Foundation now supports seven endowments at six universities in the tri-state area. Each of the new scholarships will be presented annually to an exceptional student who plans to dedicate their future to Italian studies. The scholarship requirements will be designed by faculty members from each university, and they will also select the recipients on a yearly basis.

The Sponsored Scholarship program bolsters the Coccia Foundation’s efforts to promote higher and continuing education among emerging adults, with an ultimate goal of guiding these future leaders to exhibit pride in their work, their values, and their heritage as they become dynamic members of society.

HOW CAN I BECOME A SPONSOR?
If you would like to join in the initiative to preserve Italian culture and heritage in the United States and “PASSING THE TORCH” to future generations, you are invited to join the esteemed list of current Sponsored Scholarship donors. All are listed on our website for your convenience. Please visit: www.cocciafoundation.org for more information or contact Cav. Joseph Coccia Jr. directly at 201-712-1010 or joseph@cocciafoundation.org to discuss scholarship options.

Would you like to help reduce production costs for this publication? Email the Editor at: barbarapeirano@cocciafoundation.org and let her know you’d like to read the newsletter on our website rather than receive it through the mail.

This small change will reduce printing, mailing preparation costs, and postage fees. Whether or not you choose this option, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of Elda and myself for your continued support of the Coccia Foundation.

Joseph Coccia, Jr.
Founder
This past October, many members and friends of the Coccia Foundation attended a celebration of Columbus Day and Italian Heritage Month that ranked among the best Italian feste of the year. The East Hanover Italian American Club hosted the fourth annual Morris County Columbus Day Parade, which was attended by more than 10,000 people who enjoyed viewing uniquely decorated parade floats, listening to the beautiful music of dozens of bands, and meeting many special guests who were on hand to join in the salute to Italian pride and Italian culture.

“It’s just a great celebration for the entire family to enjoy,” former East Hanover Mayor William Agnellino said of the event.

Twenty police officers from Italy traveled to New Jersey to participate in the parade and were hosted by the East Hanover Italian American Club throughout the week. John Pasquarosa, a township resident for 31 years, said, “The presence of the Polizia di Stato brings excitement for the Columbus Day celebration every year.”

The Italian officers also marched in the New York City Parade and met with the New York and New Jersey police officials to discuss various police tactics. “It is an honor to have them march, and their willingness to meet and talk to town residents further promotes Italian culture in this area,” commented Joseph DeFillippes, East Hanover Italian American Club President.

An awards dinner honoring various Italian Americans in recognition of Columbus Day was held at the Knoll Country Club in Parsippany, featuring comedian Uncle Floyd Vivino as Master of Ceremonies and music by The Infernos. The club presented the following awards to their distinguished guests: Cavaliere Joseph Coccia Jr., Founder of the Coccia Foundation, was the Parade Grand Marshall. The Italian American Man of the Year was Ralph Izzo, Ph.D., Chairman, President, and CEO of Public Service Enterprise Group (PSE&G).

(Conginued on page 9)
East Hanover Italian American Club Dinner

Morris County, New Jersey Columbus Day Parade was organized and run by the East Hanover Italian American Club. Follow the parade a gala dinner was held at Knoll Country Club, Parsippany, N.J. Presentation of Grand Marshall Plaque to Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr. Shown from l - r: Rocco Marucci, Sam Chiappa, Andrew DiSessa, Joseph DeFillipes, Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr., and Richard Tamburro.

(Continued from page 8)
Janine Strafaci, news anchor for News 12 New Jersey, was named Italian American Woman of the Year. Raymond Nisivoccia, founding partner of the accounting and consulting firm Nisivoccia & Company, was honored as Italian American Humanitarian of the Year. John T. Caravella, President of USA Sanitation, was the Italian American Entrepreneur of the year.

To add to the festivities, the East Hanover Italian American Club celebrated its 25th anniversary during the wonderful evening.

The Morris County Columbus Day Parade has grown each year since its inception in 2005 and may soon become the largest Columbus Day Parade in New Jersey. For more information on this year’s parade or how to participate in October 2009, visit www.italianamericanclub.us.

Members of the Coccia Foundation would like to Congratulate the East Hanover Italian American Club on its 25th Anniversary!!
Behind an imposing desk in a stylish office in Bakersfield, CA sits an Italian immigrant whose dreams of success led him to create an empire in an unlikely industry. Behind the desk hangs a storytelling mural—colored by flags of red, white, and blue and green, white and red, and featuring juxtaposed images of the rustic village where he was born and the skyscrapers of the land he adopted as his own. Cav. Ben Sacco is one of the world’s most innovative leaders in scrap metal processing and machinery, as well as an Italian American who proudly carries on the traditions of his homeland in the United States.

Mr. Sacco’s story begins in Montemurro, a small town in the southern Italy region of Basilicata, where he was born in 1922. Thirteen years later, he and his father boarded a ship bound for America – the land of opportunity. Mr. Sacco completed high school in New York while his father earned a living as a ballroom dance teacher, but the pair was separated when Ben patriotically volunteered to serve his new country in World War II.

As an Air Corps Military Policeman from 1942 through 1946, Sacco was stationed at numerous U.S. bases throughout the United States. Following his service, the young man returned to New York to join his father in the ballroom business. However, the dance floor was not the place where Ben Sacco foresaw his future. Soon he was migrating again, this time to the west to California. He began work as a produce vendor by day and bartender by night. Ever the entrepreneur, Sacco glimpsed a golden opportunity not in produce but in agricultural bags, and his instincts led him to establish the Sierra Bag Company in 1947. It was the beginning of a decades-long career.

Sacco’s business acumen proved precise and the fledgling business began to flourish. His military buddy and fellow New Yorker Morris Rosenberg made the trek to California to become a partner in Sierra, and several years later, he was followed by Ben’s father who joined the company as a manager. The Sierra Bag Company also developed an interest in scrap metal items. By 1959, Sacco and Rosenberg had founded the Sierra Iron & Metal Company, now known as Sierra Recycling & Demolition. When Rosenberg retired in 1985 after a long and fruitful partnership, Sacco forged on, selling Sierra Bag and beginning a foray into the machinery sector.

Once again, Sacco’s remarkable business sense had prompted an exciting new venture. During a trip back to Italy he had observed a mobile baling machine doing twice the work that an American scrap metal processing machine could do in the same amount of time. His first thought, was to bring one back to California for use in Sierra Iron & Metal. It wasn’t long before other industry leaders caught on to Sacco’s vision and began to request the machine for their own companies.

With yet another innovative idea, Ben Sacco’s next journey had begun. In his first year as a salesman for the Italian company that sold him the first baler, he had in turn sold 18 baling machines to other scrap professionals, essentially introducing the machine to the U.S. market. His success led to the formation of Sierra International Machinery in 1987 and eventually pioneered the use of another scrap processing machine in the United States. Today Sierra International Machinery, with headquarters in Bakersfield, California and offices in Ferrara, Italy and Dublin, Ireland, sells scrap equipment across the globe, secure in its position as a respected industry leader. The man behind it all, Cav. Ben Sacco, maintains that it wasn’t just a drive to succeed and business expertise that led him to the top. Throughout his long career, Sacco also devoted much of his time to something that is just as important to any Italian American as hard work, but it is not on his resume – his family. Happily married to his wife Eunice for 54 years, Ben is a father of five. “Nothing in life is more important than having your family together,” he says. And together, they work side by side – Ben’s sons John and Phillip are the presidents of Sierra International Machinery and Sierra Recycling & Demolition.

(Continued on page 14)
Maestro Fernando Raucci’s Passion Led Him To America

Maestro Fernando Raucci, a native of Italy, is the Music Director of the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra and a Professor of History of Italian Opera at Rutgers University’s Department of Italian. Most recently, he served as adjunct faculty at Rutgers University-Mason Gross School of Music, and opened the summer season of 2008 Opera New Jersey at McCarter Theater in Princeton, NJ with Giuseppe Verdi’s La Traviata.

Fernando Raucci was born in Isernia, Italy, the capital of Isernia Province. Raucci came to New Jersey ten years ago, without any family and hardly spoke English. Since then, he has been committed to educating others about Italy, music and his heritage.

His story is admirable and one of total passion. His love for music began at the incredible age of 6. Fernando’s older brother Gianfranco was taking piano and guitar lessons and their mother, Filomena, suggested that he take music lessons as well. Filomena was a teacher of Italian language and their late father, Angelo, was an Art professor. He also learned that his paternal great grandfather was quite fanatical about Opera; he named his six daughters and two sons after famous Operas or characters in Opera. “One of my aunts is Gilda, another is Tosca,” notes Raucci. To the best of Raucci’s recollection, he was 10 years old when he first became exposed to classical music. He listened to recordings of France Liszt #1 Piano Concerto and Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto #1. his mother had many classical recordings that he would play regularly. One of his favorites was Tosca by Puccini. He remembers playing Tosca over and over again in his room. It wasn’t long before Filomena realized her youngest son’s interest in Classical music and suggested that he apply to a professional music school rather than stay with a private teacher. Raucci, at age 12, took an admission exam at the Conservatorio L. Perosi in Campobasso. The Conservatory was quite impressed with this 12 year old boy and his interest in classical music was simply amazing to them. They asked him to sing something from Tosca as well as play Bach’s Clementi on the piano. Raucci received his diploma from the Conservatorio L. Perosi in piano performance and in composition.

At the age of 21, he went on to organize a festival for five consecutive years entitled “Among Squares, Churches and Castles” which was sponsored by the Dioceses of Isernia and the Province of Isernia. These annual festivals drew a large audience, however, after the fifth festival, it was clear to him that his passion all along was to become a conductor and that these festivals were “no longer enough.” It was necessary for him to take his career to the next level.

In the early 90’s, Fernando launched his career and has conducted orchestras in Poland, Russia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. However, Raucci had to decide whether to continue his career in Europe or to begin a new experience in the United States. This is where he was presented with the opportunity to come to New Jersey through the Princeton-Pettoranello Foundation Inc. This foundation, founded in 1991, is dedicated to perpetuating the heritage and common bond between the Italian village of Pettoranello (only 5 miles from his hometown Isernia) and the Princeton, New Jersey community as a whole.

He was appointed by a local opera company named “Opera International” from 1997 to 1999 based in Princeton as the Director of Music while he pursued his Masters Degree at Hartt School of Music in Hartford, receiving the Recognition of Excellence Award in Orchestra Conducting. Raucci became the Music Director for the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra in 1999 and Principal Guest Conductor of the Greater Trenton Symphony Orchestra. The review of his first performance with GPYO was: “GPYO Dazzles Under the Direction of Raucci” (Don Delaney, The Times)

Maestro Raucci started a beautiful relationship with Maestro Daniele Gatti, one of the most respected conductors in the world, following with several orchestras: Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Dresden Staats Kapelle and Wiener Philharmonic Orchestra.

(continued on page 16)
Dear Mr. Coccia,

I’d like to thank you for presenting me with the opportunity to attend this weekend’s NIAF convention in Washington, D.C. It wouldn’t have been possible without your help and dedication.

The highlight of my weekend was meeting Yankee legend Yogi Berra on Friday night. But, attending Margaret Cuomo’s workshop on Italian Language education in America was a professional highlight that I will take with me the rest of my life. After attending her conference, there is no doubt in my mind that spreading Italian culture through teaching Italian in schools is what I want to do with the rest of my life.

I had a great time, and I am already looking forward to next year’s conference!

Danielle Mc Cartan
The Students of the AMICI della CULTURA ITALIANA Group ("AMICI") held their first meeting of the current school year (2008-2009) on Saturday October 4, 2008, at the Fairleigh Dickinson University - Teaneck Campus. Thirteen Universities were represented, making the event a total success.

The guest in attendance included faculty; “AMICI” Alumni; UNICO National President-Elect Andre’ DeMino; CEO of Strategic Polymers Inc. Ralph Russo; Financial Network Investment Corp, member of the Coccia Foundation, and Saddle Brook Chapter of UNICO member Joseph Russo; and Director of the Coccia Institute at Montclair State University, Dr. Mary Ann Re. Each of the guests expressed their gratitude for being invited and were impressed with the great work being done by the Coccia Foundation and the “AMICI della CULTURA ITALIANA” membership. The Alumni Group announced they were developing a strategy on how they might become more involved with the Coccia Foundation.

Prof. Josephine Spina introduced Nicholas LaCorte, President of C.I.A.O.— Teaneck University’s “AMICI” Italian Group who presided over the meeting with the assistance of Phil Sergio, Student Liaison of the Coccia Foundation, who acted as meeting Facilitator.

On behalf of the Coccia Foundation, Phil Sergio announced the Foundation was offering many opportunities to those “AMICI” Universities and Group members. They included establishment of seven sponsored scholarships offered to graduating students at universities identified by the sponsor and the foundation who wish to go on to become Teachers of Italian, the Coccia Foundation Sponsorship to the NIAF Annual Gala Celebration held in Washington, D.C. on October 17-19, 2008, various study abroad awards to each qualifying “AMICI” Group, the availability and distribution to all “AMICI” Groups of American and Italian Flag lapel pins, T-Shirts with the “AMICI” Crest, and the Coccia Foundation Anthem CD. In addition, information concerning dates and location of Columbus Day Parades was distributed so that students could participate.

The next “AMICI” Students meeting will be held on Saturday December 6, 2008, at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. We are asking each AMICI Student to invite their parents so they may gain a better understanding of who we are and what we do.

Phil Sergio
Ben Sacco….
(Continued from page 10)
respectively, describing the man in whose footsteps they follow as “a true visionary” and citing his “love of family.” The proud father adds, “I could never have made it to this point without my sons in the business and our great team. Nobody can do it alone.”

When he isn’t working six days a week to ensure the achievements of his businesses or spending time with his family, Ben devotes himself to a third essential facet of his life – his heritage. Sacco dedicated 25 years to building bridges between Italy and the U.S. as the Vice Consul of Italy for Kern County, California. He also established his home county’s Italian Heritage Association and was bestowed with the official designations of Commendatore and Cavaliere officiale by the Republic of Italy.

At the age of 86, Ben Sacco can tell a file story that epitomizes an American success story – and an Italian American immigrant’s success story at that. But certainly this diligent worker, loving family man, and champion of Italian culture is already planning his next venture…

Book Donors Thanked

The following Institutions and individuals donated books in support of the Coccia Foundation’s newest initiative “Books for Schools” program:

- Rachele D’Emidio Bennet
- Natale Chiante
- Vito Di Ferrante
- Phyllis Ignozza
- The Language Institute
- Italian Institute of Culture
- Calandra Institute
- Joseph Manganaro
- Dr. Keith Mason
- Giovanni Pampena
- Joseph Russo Jr.

Thank you one and all. Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr. Elda M. Coccia

Federation’s 75TH Anniversary Celebration Gala

The Federation of Italian-American Societies of New Jersey held their 75th Anniversary Celebration Gala on Saturday, November 8, 2008, at the Hanover Manor in East Hanover. Federation President, Pasquale Meola, along with Chairpersons Phyllis Cedola and Peter Boreyko welcomed more that 325 members and guests to an outstanding cocktail hour, a delicious meal and Venetian table, and great dancing music provided by the Innocenti.

President Meola was proud to present the “President’s Diamond Jubilee Award” to Buddy Fortunato, Publisher of the Italian Tribune. Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr., founder of the Coccia Foundation was presented with a “Lifetime Achievement Award”. Our “2008 Man of the Year” Award was awarded to Tony Meola, the soccer legend. The Hanover Manor was presented the “2008 Merchant of the Year Award.” The presentation was made to the Hanover Manor Manager Angelo and his staff. To commemorate the Federation’s 75th Anniversary, a special presentation was made to Msgr. Joseph Granato, Pastor of St. Lucy’s Church and St.Gerard’s National Shrine. He was presented with a check for a paver to be placed in St. Gerard’s Plaza. Anna Aiello, daughter of Mark Aiello; Maria Gencarelli, daughter of Josephine and Joe Gencarelli; and Katherine Fabrizio, daughter of Bill Fabrizio and granddaughter of Audrey Fabrizio, who was Lisa’s mother, were the recipients of the Lisa’s Angel Annual Award which is presented to grammar school child/grandchild of one of the members in memory of Lisabeth Meola, a Federation member who died March 8, 2003.

The President’s Award of Merit was presented to Susan LaMorte, secretary of the Federation for her dedication and endless efforts in promoting the goals of the Federation.

A good time was had by all who attended. Anyone interested in becoming a member of this organization should contact Pasquale Meola at (973)748-0574.
Support Advanced Placement Italian

On October 30, 2008, Cav. Joseph and Elda Coccia were pleased to present a significant donation on behalf of the Coccia Foundation to Mr. Louis Tallarini and Dr. Margaret Cuomo. Mr. Tallarini serves as President of the Columbus Citizen’s Foundation and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Italian Language Foundation while Dr. Cuomo serves as President of the Italian Language Foundation.

Most American high schools offer Spanish and French. But the strong and growing demand for Italian language studies is not being met. We must provide students with the chance to learn Italian. The Italian Language Foundation was created to give American high school students the chance to learn the Italian language and the magnificent history and culture of Italy.

We must support the nationwide Advanced Placement Italian Language and Culture Program offered to American high school students by The College Board.

The AP Program lets students get college credit for their high school work, and it can reduce the length and cost of their college education.

The Italian Language Foundation will provide the funding for AP Italian this growing program grows large enough to sustain itself. The program was launched in 2005. In just its 2nd year, enrollment was up by over 22%.

The Foundation needs your support. Please help the foundation foster an appreciation of the rich Italian language and culture for generations of American high school students. And remember—100% of the donation you make is tax deductible and goes towards supporting Italian language education.

To add your support to this important initiative, please go to www.italianlanguagefoundation.org.

Volunteers Needed

The Coccia Foundation has, since its inception, grown more quickly, helped more students, and held more cultural events than any of us would have thought possible at the start.

The requests to the Foundation are received on a daily basis. We have had the indescribable pleasure of seeing the appreciation and determination to preservation of our Italian Culture grow in the hearts of the student groups the Foundation was instrumental in forming at colleges throughout the country.

Student attention and interest, along with that of their parents, families, professors, and sponsors is on the increase. This phenomenon has created a need for Volunteers. Can you help?

All interested persons kindly call Joseph at (201) 712-1010 or Email him at: Joseph@cocciafoundation.org.

AP Italian Workshop

I just wanted to send a personal thank you for your generosity and that of the Foundation. I really am looking forward to attending the workshop and utilizing what I learned that day in my own classroom in the future.

Best regards,

Antonio Totino
Seton Hall University
– Class of 2009
Maestro (continued from page 11)

In addition to Raucci’s musical activities in his adopted USA homeland, he has been committed to educating others about Italy and its music and cultural heritage. He has brought traditional Italian favorites to the American stage, and introduced audiences to unique Italian traditions. In 2003, he was awarded the prestigious Accademia, an annual international prize from the European Academy for Economical Cultural Relations (AEREC) for advancing cultural exchanges between nations. Maestro Raucci was inducted into the Italian American National Hall of Fame in Atlantic City, NJ in 2004.

From 2002-2005, Maestro Raucci spent three successful years as Assistant of American Symphony Orchestra, Lincoln Center, New York, with Maestro Leon Botstein. In the summer of 2005, the Maestro was invited to the renowned Spoleto Festival in Italy.

The Coccia Institute at Montclair State University sponsored a lecture on the life of Giuseppe Verdi and an additional program entitled “An Evening of Opera Delights” in 2007 to commemorate its fourth anniversary at MSU. It featured Italian Opera selections and was open to the public. The evening performance, produced by Dr. Robert Freda, was led by conductor Maestro Fernando Raucci, and also featured performing artists from Opera New Jersey.

Upcoming events include a series of December concerts in Italy and with GPYO on the Campus of Princeton University on January 24, 2009 and June 6th, 2009. Raucci will become an American citizen and will enjoy dual citizenship with Italy soon.

We are very fortunate to have a native Italian such as Maestro Raucci in the United States as a part of our Italian American community and as a bridge between our ancestors and the new Italian generation.

Elisa Coccia

The Fifth annual Joseph and Elda Coccia Conference, presented by the Center for Italian Studies in the University of Pennsylvania, was held November 21-22, 2008. Entitled “Futurism: Rupture and Tradition”, this conference was supported by the Italian Consulate General in Philadelphia and the Italian Cultural Institute of Washington and was organized by Dr. Christine Poggi and Dr. Fabio Finotti. This program was free and open to the public.

In Italian Culture, Philology and Literary History are not only modern critical responses to the texts with which they engage, they are also constitutive strategies of these texts themselves. Beginning with Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, Philology and Literary History opened the path to a dramatic reshaping of personal and public history, and to a dramatic cultural and anthropological revolution.

The Coccia Family wishes to extend a special thanks to Dr. Finotti and his Italian Department.
Culture Day at Westchester Community College

Westchester Italian Club, IL CLUB ITALIANO, presented “SBANDIERATORI” with Italian flag throwers and dancers directly from Italy. The program was under the direction of Dr. Carlo Sclafani, Italian Director, and club President, Eugenia Serratto.
The Coccia Institute’s fall season was both an active and a successful one, if participant feedback and attendance are any indication! The academic school year started with the launch of the NJ AP (Advanced Placement) Italian Task Force, which piggybacked on The Italian Teachers of New Jersey’s (ITANJ) first professional conference of the year, “Primo Incontro,” under the leadership of ITANJ President, NJIIAHC Commissioner Catherine Vignale. Held at Rutgers University, Italian teachers in attendance benefited from presentations by then Vice Consul of Italy in Newark, Andrea Barbaria; Director of Education for the NY Consulate General, Alfio Russo; President of the newly formed Italian Language Foundation, Dr. Margaret Cuomo; and Dean of the Calandra Institute and President of the American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI), Dr. Anthony Tamburri.

The most important event of the Coccia Institute season was held on September 26th at the Student Center of Montclair State University. Entitled, “Teaching Italian: A Symposium/Workshop for Instructional Materials—Meeting I: Speaking,” it was the first in a series. (Save the Date for next year’s symposium—October 2, 2009—“Meeting II: Writing.”) As noted by Dr. Nancy Carnevale, Commissioner of the NJIIAHC and Chair of its Higher Education Committee, “The Teaching Italian Symposium/Workshop provides what Italian teachers have been asking for— the latest instructional materials and guidance on how best to use them in the classroom.” Co-organized by Dr. Andrea Dini and Dr. Enza Antenos-Conforti of the Department of Spanish and Italian at Montclair State University, this high caliber event went a long way towards filling the unmet need expressed by high school teachers of Italian who had participated in the very successful symposia on Italian language, Italian Studies and Italian American Studies, “Showcase Italian I and II,” organized by the Higher Education Committee of the NJIIAHC in the spring of 2006 and 2007.

During the “Teaching Italian” symposium, a packed house of teachers of Italian at all levels, as well as Italian teachers-in-training from all across the region, were treated to lectures and interactive workshops by prominent academic leaders in the field: Dr. Janice Ask (Ohio State University), Dr. Elissa Tognozzi (University of California at Los Angeles), Dr. Gabriella Colussi Arthur (York University—Toronto), and Dr. Irene Marchegiani (State University of New York at Stony Brook). Kicking off the all-day program, Dean Claire Taub enthusiastically welcomed participants to the university, and Consul Andrea Barbaria offered compelling remarks in support of the mission of the newly formed Italian Language Foundation.

Most recently, a standing room only audience of students and community members enjoyed the historical photo-narrative presented by Dr. Vincenza Scarpaci on her newly published book, “A Journey of the Italians in America” (November 10th, Dickson Hall, Montclair State University).
Dr. Mary Ann Re, Appointed New Director of Coccia Institute

The Joseph and Elda Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America is pleased to announce the appointment of Mary Ann Re, Ph.D., as its new director.

A sociologist by training, Dr. Re brings a wealth of experience in strategic planning, program development, and project implementation to the position. Some of you may be familiar with Dr. Re in the role of Executive Director of the New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission (NJIIAHC), where she served for two years prior to assuming her current position as Director of the Coccia Institute on August 25th.

Mary Ann earned a Ph.D. in Sociology from St. John’s University, where she had also been awarded her B.A. summa cum laude. She has worked in social service and policy research in New York and Washington States; in a number of positions at AT&T Headquarters in New Jersey, including Director of their Consumer Testing Laboratory at Bell Labs; Director of Global Employee Research in Executive Human Resources; Program Analyst in Business Market Research and Strategic Alliances; and at CINN Worldwide, a New York publishing house, including its Italian Academy Foundation.

Immediately preceding her joining the NJ Commission, Mary Ann had collaborated on a number of research projects with the New York based Institute for Italian-American Studies (INIAS).

Dr. Re’s responsibilities include the development and implementation of educational and cultural programs as well as outreach/relationship building with other academic, cultural, and diplomatic institutions in advancement of the Coccia Institute’s goals. While Mary Ann reports directly to Dr. Claire Taub, Interim Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Montclair State University, she works in close collaboration with the Coccia Institute’s knowledgeable and dedicated Board of Advisors.

Mary Ann’s paternal family emigrated to Brooklyn, NY from Santa Marina Salina, Isole Eolie, Province of Messina (Sicily). Mary Ann and her family have restored the family home and eagerly await their annual visit. In addition to serving as Vice President of the Associazione Eoliani nel Mondo, based in Lipari (Isole Eolie), she is actively engaged with a number of other cultural and civic organizations, including the newly formed NY-NJ Italian Cultural Bridge (under the auspices of the Italian Cultural Institute and the Consulate of Italy in Newark); the Italian Heritage Culture Committee of New York; La Confederazione Siciliani Nord America; and The Italian American Heritage Club of Hunterdon County, NJ.

An enthusiastic and resourceful professional that is passionate about her heritage and the mission of the Coccia Institute, we believe you will concur that Dr. Re is a most welcome addition to the Coccia Team!

For further information, please visit: www.montclair.edu/coccia
A New Anthem Is Born

In conjunction with the Coccia Foundation’s major 2008 expansion and our continued interest in new projects and initiatives that perpetuate our mission of “PASSING THE TORCH” to young people and emerging adults, early this year the organization announced the creation of the Italian American community’s new musical anthem.

 Appropriately and affectionately titled Italmania, the traditional song chronicles the journey of Italian immigrants as they sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in search of a better life and imparts their collective experience upon their arrival in the United States. Through eloquent lyrics written by Anthony DiPerno, the anthem explores the Italian immigrant struggle to “overcome adversity” even as this courageous group attempted to “preserve identity” in their new nation. The song goes on to pay tribute to the many Italians who used their skills to build America and “make it strong and free,” while reminding listeners that “Italy will never be too far.”

Italmania inspires young Italian Americans to take pride in their heritage and the legacy of their forefathers. The poignant memorial to our ancestors encourages a love for all things Italian and also mentions some of Italy’s best known landmarks and personalities.

Coccia Foundation founder Cav. Joseph Coccia Jr. offers a moving introduction to the anthem, which is sung with passionate zeal by Carmen Jon Boscia. He is supported by the beautiful vocals of Nicole Nicastro, granddaughter of Cav. Coccia Jr., who is currently interviewing for a Broadway role. Cav. Coccia Jr. notes that the new anthem aids in the preservation of “our rich Italian heritage” and lovingly dedicates the song to the memory of his father, Joseph Coccia Sr., a proud Italian immigrant.

Credits:
Theme and Lyrics—Anthony DiPerno and Carmen Jon
Vocals—Carmen Jon and Nicole Nicastro
Music arranged and produced by Dean Bailin at 4 Cats Studio, NY USA
Jacket Design and Art—Christine Forte

SAVE THE DATE - Monday June 29, 2009
8th Annual Italian Studies Golf Classic
Evenings entertainment will be world renowned comedian Uncle Floyd Vivino.

Coccia Foundation
“preserving Italian culture”
Foundation Office
23 Leswing Avenue
Saddle Brook, NJ 07663

Benvenuti...
To our AMICI and supporters.

Thank you for bringing our rich Italian Culture and Heritage into your home.