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LITTLE ITALY: A BIG IDEA FOR REBUILDING AMERICA

(WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 7, 2011) This year's **Frank J. Guarini/NIAF Media Forum** made rebuilding America through Little Italys across the United States its central theme. **Marco Li Mandri**, president of New City America Inc., a company dedicated to the growth and facilitation of street-based urban business districts, served as the event's keynote speaker.

The ninth-annual event was held at the Italian Consul General **Fabrizio Marcelli's** private residence on March 2, 2011. **Marcelli** invited everyone to attend the upcoming March 21 birthday party to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Italy's unification in the city's Union Square at 12:30 p.m.

This year's media co-chairs included **Albert C. Pacciorini**, editor of The Catholic Voice and **Joe Rosato, Jr.**, field producer at NBC 11 News. Silicon Valley attorney and NIAF Regional Vice President **Jeff Capaccio** provided introductory remarks and welcomed **Li Mandri**, "Mr. Little Italy."

Li Mandri spoke to more than 50 journalists of Italian ancestry and Italophiles about the high standards of excellence developed within San Diego's Little Italy, a model for other business improvement districts (BID). He stressed the importance of raising the bar in these enclaves throughout the U.S., emphasizing the display of authentic Italian products, creation of public spaces and recognition of outstanding Italian Americans, both contemporary and historical. Since San Diego's Little Italy has been rated the most successful and vibrant in the country, Li Mandri shared some of the events planned in San Diego including a weekly Saturday "mercato", masked balls, international stick ball tournaments and their premier Festa Italiana held each October, which gathers visitors in the tens of thousands.

The forum showcased NIAF's educational programs and recognized **Cassandra Janakos**, a NIAF Voyage of Discovery participant and senior at the University of California at Berkeley, and **Louis Dematteis**, a grant recipient who produced the documentary "Crimebuster: A Son's Search for his Father."

During the dinner, guests enjoyed Italian specialties from Umbria, Italy prepared by **Giulio Tempesta**, NIAF council member and proprietor of Ristorante Umbria. The wines were provided by NIAF council member **Lorenzo Scarpone**, CEO of Villa Italia. **Franco Minniti**, area sales manager, had the guests sample the award winning Paggio Pinot Nero and Tenuta Fossi Moscato.

LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO

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Other media guests enjoying the evening's camaraderie included San Francisco Chronicle political columnists **Carla Marinucci** and **Joe Garofoli**, ABC 7 news producers **Lisa Caracciolo** and **Paula Marcheschi** USA Today cultural reporter **Marco della Cava**; KRON-4 news anchor **Vicki Liviakis**; Univision Radio vice president **Tony Perlongo** and L' Espresso correspondent **Paolo Pontoniere**.

The Foundation's media forums give professionals in the communications field an opportunity to foster working relationships with colleagues and learn about the Foundation's exciting youth initiatives. Through these events, NIAF cultivates an excellent rapport with members of the media, promotes Italian Americans, and examines the important issues facing the Italian-American community today. NIAF hosts similar events are planned in other major cities throughout the U.S.

The National Italian American foundation (NIAF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the heritage of Italian Americans. Visit www.niaf.org.