



## **Columbus Citizen Foundation. A Ceremony for L'Aquila and Abruzzo**

(January 19, 2012)



A ceremony will take place in L'Aquila on January 20th. A scholarship will be announced to help the students of the city and the unveiling of a statue that commemorates heroes and sacrifices of Aquilani will follow

New York, NY, January 19, 2012 - Representatives of the [Columbus Citizens Foundation](#) [2] will join local and national Italian representatives tomorrow in a ceremony to present L'Aquila and Abruzzo with material and humanitarian aid. Held in [L'Aquila](#) [3], [Abruzzo](#) [4], Italy, the event will recall the devastating earthquake that struck L'Aquila on April 6, 2009, and honor the indomitable spirit of the people of L'Aquila and the province of Abruzzo as they continue to rebuild their lives and communities.



The ceremony will take place at the Piazza Duomo in L'Aquila on January 20, 2012, at 10:00 AM.

As part of the event, Frank Fusaro and Louis Tallarini, president and chairman of the Columbus Citizens Foundation, respectively, will present Massimo Cialente, Mayor of L'Aquila, with a mobile police unit that has long been a great need of the city's to facilitate serving its displaced populace and a statue. They will also announce a fund established by the Columbus Citizens Foundation to underwrite arts scholarships for students of the area.

Mr. Fusaro and Mr. Tallarini will also present as a donation to the people of L'Aquila "Eagle Portrait," a bronze sculpture by renowned American artist Greg Wyatt, who is making the gift of the sculpture with the Newington-Cropsey Foundation, of Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. In Italian, "aquila" means "eagle," and the donation will serve to commemorate the transAtlantic cultural bridge and enduring bonds between the nations of Italy and the United States.

"On April 6, 2009, the City of L'Aquila and the Province of Abruzzo suffered a devastating earthquake that took hundreds of lives, left thousands injured and many more homeless, and destroyed or damaged thousands of buildings and monuments in this great Medieval city," said Mr. Fusaro. "At the time, the Columbus Citizens Foundation contacted officials here to let them know that they were in our hearts and that we would stand at the ready to provide aid as needed. That day has come, and we have not forgotten our solemn vow to our brothers and sisters in Italy."

"As representatives of an Italian-American organization, we are proud and privileged to share a common ancestry with the people of L'Aquila and Abruzzo," said Mr. Tallarini. "We come to L'Aquila humbled by the tremendous spirit they have shown in working together to rebuild their lives and community. The people of L'Aquila and Abruzzo are an inspiration to us and to the world. Their plight and determination, their resourcefulness and their continuing need must not be forgotten."

Mayor Cialente said in a statement, "We welcome Mr. Fusaro and Mr. Tallarini as representatives of the Columbus Citizens Foundation and the heartfelt support that they have provided during the long, difficult years since the earthquake struck. The task of the people of L'Aquila and Abruzzo, nearly three years later, remains daunting. Thousands of our citizens remain in refugee camps untethered from their homes and removed from their relatives and neighbors. Yet they strive to go on with their lives as they raise their families and remain part of our community. The generosity of the Foundation and its members, in spirit and support, are a welcome and critical reminder for us that the world outside continues to support and remember us as we rebuild our historic region."

The Columbus Citizens Foundation tomorrow will present to Eugenio Vendrame, the Chief Police Officer of L'Aquila, a mobile police unit that will let L'Aquila police adapt to the changed demographics of L'Aquila's population. Today, approximately 18,000 L'Aquila residents still live in temporary housing constructed outside the traditional boundary of the city. Members of L'Aquila's police department, often called upon to resolve situations that involve the elderly and disabled, have been hampered by responding to calls with traditional police cars. The mobile unit will let L'Aquila's police provide immediate assistance to the displaced people of the city.

The ceremony will also feature the presentation and unveiling of "Eagle Portrait," a sculpture by Greg Wyatt, Sculptor-in-Residence of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City and Master Teacher of the Foundation's Franco Zeffirelli Scholarship Fund for the Arts program. The 6-foot, 2-inch tall bronze sculpture, including base, pays homage to one of nature's most noble creatures while illustrating the fierce determination of the people of L'Aquila to surmount the devastation caused by the earthquake of 2009 and rebuild their ancient city and community.

Mr. Wyatt works in bronze, and his art has been described as based in the philosophy of spiritual realism. It is found in public collections and museums in countries around the world, including China, England, France, Greece, Italy, and the United States. His work often addresses issues of freedom, individual spirit and achievement, the fine and performing arts, and themes from classical literature and texts. "Eagle Portrait," which was created in 1999, was a model-to-monument preparatory work in the development of "Soaring American Eagle," which is on permanent display at the U.S. Department of State. Michelangiolo Bastiani, of Florence, was instrumental in arranging the donation



of "Eagle Portrait."

At the ceremony, Mr. Fusaro and Mr. Tallarini will also announce the Foundation's creation of the L'Aquila Scholarship Program, through which students of the arts from L'Aquila will have the opportunity to study their disciplines in New York City. The L'Aquila Scholarship Program will be part of the Foundation's Franco Zeffirelli Scholarship Fund for the Arts, which was established in 2002 in honor of Mr. Zeffirelli's contributions to the world of film and stage. The Zeffirelli Fund continues a long-standing tradition of cultural exchange between Italy and the United States that dates back to the founding of America and has provided funding to students in the fine and performing arts.

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#### About the Columbus Citizens Foundation

The Columbus Citizens Foundation is a non-profit organization in New York City committed to fostering an appreciation of Italian-American heritage and achievement. The Foundation, through a broad range of philanthropic and cultural activities, provides opportunities for advancement to deserving Italian-American students through various scholarship and grant programs. During the 2011-2012 school year, the Foundation is providing just under \$2 million in scholarship assistance to over 500 students. The Foundation organizes New York City's annual Columbus Celebration and Columbus Day Parade, which has been held under the auspices of the Foundation since 1944. Known as a leading proponent of Italian and Italian American culture and heritage in the United States, the Columbus Citizens Foundation in 2010 was the lead American organization in reinstating the Advanced Placement Program in Italian Language and Culture program in the American educational system.

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