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Italian-American group in the spotlight

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — The newly formed Staten Island Network of the National Organization of Italian-American Women (NOIAW) launched its first cultural program Tuesday evening, they call Walk of Fame, at Casa Belvedere, the Italian cultural foundation on Grymes Hill.

The event played to a sold-out audience of members and non-members, including 10 female college and graduate exchange students from Italy with majors in the fields of mathematics and engineering, as well as their Italian chaperones. A champagne reception followed the formal program.

The Walk of Fame featured award-winning Italian-American female filmmakers Lucia Grillo of Calabrisella Films and Marylou Tibald-Bongiorno of Bongiorno Productions.

The filmmakers screened their films and participated in post-screening discussions with the audience.

Note that Lucia is both an actress and a filmmaker. Her short film, "A pena do pana," or the "The Cost of Bread," features the late actor Vincent Schavelli ("Ghost," "One Flew over the Cuckoo's

Nest” and “Amadeus”) and takes place in Calabria, Italy, in 1959.

The film was awarded Best Digital Short at the Roma Independent Film Festival. It garnered Ms. Grillo the title Ambassador of Calabria and has been selected by more than 20 international film festivals worldwide.

Marylou is a film producer, director, writer and alumna of New York University’s graduate film program. She creates cinema with her cinematographer/editor/writer husband, Jerome Bongiorno, a Staten Island native.

Her screening of “Mother-Tongue: Italian-American Sons & Mothers” features John and Katherine Turturro, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, film legend Martin Scorsese and others in a documentary that explores the special relationships that exist between Italian-American men and their mothers.

The award-winning film garnered an Emmy nomination (it debuted on television) and was screened at the Venice Film Festival, Pesaro Film Festival and numerous festivals and events worldwide.

The Staten Island/NOIAW Program launch was made possible in part by the generosity of Dr. Joseph T. Mormino; Vienna Profeta; Pastosa Ravioli; A.F. Bennett; Casa Belvedere; Lou Barella; Howard Hill; John Marchi, and The St. George Theatre.

Hosts for the NOIAW program launch were several members of the Staten Island/NOIAW Network Program Steering Committee, chaired by MaryRose Barranco Morris.

Committee members include: Rosemarie Coppola-Baldwin; Michele Ceruti; Evelyn Finn; Joan Marchi Migliori; Patricia Regan; Evelyn Rosetti Ryan; Carol Ann Benanti; Lenore Costantino; Verna Lauria; Maria Petrone; Gina Reitano; Cara Buonincontri; Carin Guarasci; Fran Meyers; Vienna Profeta, and the Rev. Terry Troia.

The newly formed Staten Island Network has attracted 90 local members into the National Organization, which is the premier organization for women of Italian ancestry.

The Staten Island Steering Committee hopes to design and produce about nine more programs next year which will be offered to the public and members at various venues throughout Staten Island. Non-members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

To learn more about NOIAW and to become a NOIAW member, visit the website at www.NOIAW.org or telephone its executive director, Maria Tamburri, at 212-642-2003.

CELEBRATIONS

Happy birthday today to Jon Cauldwell; Tommy Ward McGinley; Jane Marino, who celebrates a special birthday; Peyton Grace Kelly, who turns 1 and will celebrate at Lorenzo’s at the Hilton Garden Inn, Bloomfield; Tom Dowd; John C. Andersen Jr.; William McDermott, Dillon Clancy, who turns 16, and Alexandria Doyle.

Happy wedding anniversary to Rose and Jack Forlenza.

Birthday greetings tomorrow to Civil Court Judge Philip Straniere; Rob McCarthy; Kelly Nola; Keith Massaro; Michael Vincent Ruggiero; Jeanne Susie McGinley-Ruehl; Tim Golden; Steven Noss, and Peter Anthony Arrigo III.

Also, happy birthday to Julia Brucato, who turns 11 tomorrow, according to grandparents Betty and Carl Carrara, who wish her the best birthday with love.

And happy wedding anniversary to Fran and Harry Berkowitz.



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