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**Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of
NY, Inc. Celebrates
*Matera: European Cultural Capital 2019***

In a duly convened board meeting of the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of New York, Inc. (IHCC-NY) on January 8, 2019, its members enthusiastically voted for this year's annual theme to celebrate *Matera: European Cultural Capital 2019*. This decision coincides with the inaugural of the yearlong celebration in Matera on January 19th and 20th. On this occasion, the IHCC-NY's President/Chair, Joseph Sciame, and the entire Board of Directors congratulate the city and citizens of Matera for their historical patrimony and their economic, social and cultural development of Matera's natural wonders, including the multi-use of its ancient caves dwellings, *I Sassi*, dating back to the Paleolithic period and designated as a World Heritage site, now transformed into contemporary homes, hotels, museums, restaurants, art and artisan workshops. It is the occasion to celebrate Matera's past, present and future as a symbol of the creative process and the relationship of man and environment.

The IHCC-NY's Board of Directors is comprised of a volunteer group of leaders of the Italian and Italian American community, founded in 1976, with the mission of promoting, presenting and preserving Italian and Italian American culture in the Tri-State area. Its annual theme is mirrored by other states in their event programming through America. During the year, and especially in October's Italian Heritage and Culture Month, the IHCC-NY will host, coordinate or publicize theme related presentations, symposiums, seminars, a student essay contest, proclamations and tributes to Matera and its citizens in Basilicata and in the United States. In addition, there will be a special recognition, the IHCC-NY's highest honor, the daVinci award. The committee's publicly supported educational materials, including theme related posters, bookmarks and booklets, will continue to be distributed free to educational and cultural institutions, ensuring the committee's ongoing education of the general public about the merits of Italian and Italian American culture, and, throughout 2019, the merits of Matera.

IHCC-NY Board Member, Cav. Uff. Mico Delianova Licastro, who is the representative of the Italian National Olympic Committee in the US (CONI), also has been designated as the *Ambasciatore nel Mondo di Matera Capitale Europea della Cultura 2019* by the president of Fondazione Matera Basilicata 2019, the Hon. Salvatore Adduce.

The IHCC-NY thanks the European Union for its selection of Matera and also congratulates Plovdiv, Bulgaria, also an historically and culturally rich city, which likewise, is designated with the same honor for 2019.

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