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**SPANO INAUGURATES “WESTCHESTER DESK” IN ITALY
New resource will open up additional business opportunities for local companies**

Yesterday in Milan, Italy, County Executive Andrew J. Spano opened up a “Westchester Desk” as part of an agreement with the Italian Center for Commercial Affairs-USA (ICCA) – a move which should pave the way for Westchester companies interested in doing business in Italy.

The Westchester Desk, which will operate out of ICCA’s offices at no charge to the county, will work with the county’s Office for Economic Development to promote trade, business opportunities, industrial cooperation, and cultural and technological exchange between key cities in Italy and Westchester County. Even small companies - which might otherwise never pursue overseas sales - will be able to get assistance entering a global market.

“This partnership will ensure that Westchester companies obtain a leading share of the ever-increasing growth in international trade,” Spano said. “Having a physical presence in a key region of Italy will let us better promote Westchester as a global center of excellence and open doors for local businesses.”

Spano noted that the inauguration was attended by high ranking officials in the Italian region, including the commercial attache from the US Dept. of Commerce and his Italian counterpart. An Italian manager, Salvatore Cicco, will staff the desk.

The creation of a Westchester Desk was the culmination of a week of economic and other meetings by a county delegation in the cities of Genoa, Turin, and Milan. Besides Spano, the delegation included Salvatore Carrera, director of Economic Development; Joseph Stout, parks commissioner; Marsha Gordon, executive director of the County Chamber of Commerce; White Plains Mayor Joseph Delfino; Jerry Mulligan, planning commissioner; Margo Jones, director of tourism; and county CIO Norm Jacknis. The trip was paid for by the Italian cities being visited.

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The delegation embarked on the week-long trip, which ended today, as part of a long-term strategy to promote international trade and help companies here in Westchester. A similar delegation, also led by Spano, visited China in August 2002 to scout out opportunities and cultivate new business relationships.

Italy's Westchester Desk will be involved with public relations, promotion, exhibits and fairs, and the representation and distribution of Westchester products and services, as well as offer administrative support for the Italian business presence of these companies.

In Genoa, the delegation was welcomed as the first such group from America to come for trade discussions. Members met with several Italian companies whose interests ranged from wanting to learn about office space for American headquarters to seeking partners for innovative new technology projects. The county executive also met with the president of the Liguria Region (equivalent to governor of a state), mayor of Genoa, the leaders of the local business community and a group of technology companies that have organized a "virtual technology park" similar to Westchester's Information Technology Cluster.

In Turin, Spano and the delegation met with leaders of the regional organization responsible for global trade and economic growth opportunities, who were enthusiastic about the possibilities of mutual economic growth. They felt their companies could help Westchester companies increase sales in the European market while Westchester companies could do the same in North America.

Other highlights included:

- Discussion with the leading European superconductivity firm, Ansaldo Superconduttori, about its role in the multinational demonstration project of plasma/fusion energy and the possibility of replacement of nuclear fission at Indian Point.
- Signing of a joint venture on park planning with six mayors in the Milan area.
- Briefings by the American consulate in Milan and discussions with both the Milan mayor and the head of the Italian national chamber of commerce.

NOTE TO REPORTERS: The county executive returns this afternoon when he will be available for interviews.