

Summer in Narni(a) for 20 American Students: IACE Summer Program 2012

Francesca Giuliani (June 20, 2012)



IACE Summer Program Award Ceremony was held at the Italian Consulate General in New York. Thanks to the program, 20 Italian language student from public schools in the Tristate area will spend two weeks in Narni, Umbria, to perfect their language skills and participate in the activities of the Narnia Arts Festival.

Yesterday afternoon the [Consulate General of Italy](#) [2] in New York hosted a very special award ceremony. The honorees were twenty middle and high school students from the Tristate area studying Italian in public schools affiliated with the [Italian American Committee on Education](#) [3](IACE), who have won the opportunity to participate in a Summer trip to Italy next July thanks to IACE Summer Program.

Made possible by a joint effort between IACE, the Consulate General of Italy in New York and the [Italian Tourism Board](#) [4], IACE Summer Program is now celebrating its 12 edition. This year, the



program will take place in Narni, Umbria, a medieval town in the heart of central Italy made famous in C. S. Lewis' fantasy book "The Chronicles of Narnia."

"Umbria is the green heart of Italy," said the Italian Tourism Board's Director Eugenio Magnani to i-Italy, "It's a very spiritual land, and full of flavor. I am sure the students will appreciate their stay in Narni very much," he added. The participating students will be taking Italian lessons in the morning and go on sightseeing trips in the afternoon. This year, the students will also be actively involved in the [Narnia Arts Festival](#) [5], and will be able to attend concerts, ballets and cultural activities which will take place in Narni in coincident dates with their Italian Summer Program (July 1 to July 13).

The idea of binding together the IACE Summer Program with the Narnia Arts Festival sprang from the constant contact between Berardo Paradiso, President of IACE, and Cristiana Pegoraro, Artistic Director of the Festival, whom expressed her excitement for the initiative: "It will be amazing to have kids practicing Italian in Italy while being immersed in a musical and artistic environment. They will have the chance to make friends with other kids who play an instrument or dance, and they will find themselves bonded in the universal language of art."

In order to qualify for the Summer Program, the students were asked to produce multimedia projects about Narni. Some of these projects were showcased yesterday at the Award Ceremony at the Consulate, such as the presentation by Jordan Avello, 16, student at [Columbia High School](#) [6] in New Jersey.

Born in a Cuban descent family, Jordan decided to start studying Italian when he got bored with learning Spanish in school, which he already could speak. "It's been pretty fun to study Italian, this is my second year of classes. I am really excited to go to Narni, I have never left the country before," Jordan told i-Italy.

"In our school the Italian language program is more popular than any other language program," said Professor Susanna Fischer from Ocean County, NJ, receiving the award for her 13 year-old Egyptian-American student Olivia Yasser. "Italian is not a language confined to Italy anymore, it is the language of culture, of arts, of architecture, of fashion, of food," she added.

Berardo Paradiso, President of IACE, confirmed the fact that Italian is increasingly becoming an attractive subject of study as it is a means to a fuller understanding of the Italian culture: "UNESCO estimates that Italy holds 67% of the world's culture. Italian is no longer an ethnic language, it's the language of culture. IACE has over 42,000 students in the Tristate area, and kids now say that Italian is cool, because it helps them understanding art, Opera, food, fashion and so on."

Consul General Natalia Quintavalle, who awarded the students with their diplomas, was pleased with how Italian has become an appealing subject for so many students who have no family ties with Italy: "They must have become passionate about Italy through other channels, and it's something very impressive. It is really great to know that there is such a deep interest for the Italian language and culture, and the IACE courses are having an extraordinary success." About the Summer Program, Consul Quintavalle told i-Italy: "I am sure these students will cherish this experience in their memory for a very long time, and I hope they will come back to the US even more motivated to continue studying Italian."

The importance of studying Italian for students of Italian descent is still very much felt. Scott Trivella and Joseph Sansone, classmates at Westlake High School in Westchester County, NY, were both born in Italian-American families and learned more about their heritage through their 5 years of Italian classes.

"My whole family is Italian and I just wanted to learn more about Italy," Joseph told i-Italy. "I have never been to Italy but I always wanted to go since I was young," he added. His friend Scott has visited Sicily, the homeland of his grandfather, and he is very excited to go back to Italy: "This will be an experience of a lifetime and I can't wait for it," he told i-Italy. The students agreed on the fact that Italian is "kinda tough," but according to Joseph it is "a lot easier to learn it when you have friendly teachers, creating a great learning environment." Scott said he enjoys reading Italian the most: "I like to see it on paper, I like to be able to pronounce words."



Professor Alfred Valentini has worked with IACE since 1999 and has been the chaperon of the Summer Program students for many years. "They usually behave very well," he told i-Italy, "they are very interested in Italian with practical purposes and personal ones."

As far as the practical purposes are concerned, Cathy Vignale, President of the [Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey](#) [7], told i-Italy about the significant impact of the Advanced Placement Program in motivating more and more students to choose Italian as a subject of study. "All of the kids who have been on these Summer trips to Italy go back to Italy sooner or later in their academic life," she added.

The importance of teaching Italian to the younger generations is deeply felt by the Italian institutions in Italy as well. Silvana Mangione, Deputy Secretary General at the General Council of Italians Abroad and Board Member of IACE, told i-Italy about how this goal is at the core of the General Council of Italians Abroad's activity, and anticipated the fact that in November 2012 an international convention on the subject will be held in Rome, 7 years after the historical convention of Montecatini where the strategy for the teaching of Italian language was established.

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