

# A salute to tireless social commitment

## COSTI Reception Centre renamed for Ralph Chiodo

By Elena Serra

Successful businessman and social community activist Ralph Chiodo was honoured on Thursday Nov. 25 with the announcement that the COSTI Reception Centre has been re-named to The Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre. It is an acknowledgement to Chiodo for his social commitment and his \$300,000 donation for the restoration of an important building that is approaching its 100 years of life.

The announcement was made by Frank Iacobucci, a former member of the Supreme Court and the current COSTI board director.

"I feel honoured for having received this recognition," Chiodo told *Corriere Canadese/Tandem*, "more so seeing my story as an immigrant coming to Canada at the end of the '50s."

Over the past two decades, the Lippincott Street edifice in Toronto was the first "home" for well over 20,000 refugees to Canada, providing them a safe place, a warm meal, health care, and other services that facilitated their integration into the Canadian community. Chiodo is a very active member of the Italian-Canadian community, offering his personal contribution to numerous benefit organizations and initiatives.

Notwithstanding the fact that Chiodo is a successful businessman who is the founder and president of Active Green + Ross Tire & Automotive Centres, Peel Chrysler Jeep Dodge, and his construction company, Chiodo never forgets those who are less fortunate, and does his best to contribute to the community.

Thanks to the Pasta Festa event he organized, over half a million dollars have been raised in recent years which have been



distributed to Trillium Health Centre. Chiodo has also organized fundraisers for Pier 21. The Canadian immigration museum exhibit "Un Casetta in Canada" celebrates, among others, the story of Ralph and Rose Chiodo's arrival in Canada to realize their dreams.

"I came to Canada in 1957 from Calabria with my mother, sister, and brother, landing at Pier 21," Chiodo continues. "In 1959 I wanted to become an apprentice mechanic and decided to take a COSTI course to get the diploma I required. I didn't eventually need it because I was admitted to the mechanic course, but the importance of COSTI for newcomers is still well-known to everyone."

Today, Chiodo has 76 repair

shops, but he has never forgotten his path.

"I had a dream, and I was able to realize it," Chiodo concluded. "I was fortunate, and our solidarity is what my family and myself can give back to the community and to those who are in the same situation we were when we came to Canada."

During the event on Nov. 25, Bruno M. Suppa, COSTI president, expressed his acknowledgement to the Chiodo family: "Ralph has contributed in an extraordinary manner to the community, and continues to dedicate his time and energy towards initiatives that recognize the importance of immigrants and newcomers to Canada. His example will constitute a significant legacy for years to come." ♦

## Building faith without borders

### UCEMI holds meeting on inter-religious dialogue

By Giovanni Riccitelli

Inter-religious dialogue between Catholics and Muslims was the topic discussed last month by UCEMI, the lay organization which gathers together all of the Catholics of Italian origin.

The UCEMI President of Toronto, Giovanni Riccitelli, opened the meeting by stating that dialogue is always possible when there is an open faith, an optimistic confidence and trust in God. Islam or Christianity, he said, are only directions in life: no religion is to take God's place.

He gave examples of people who in both faiths have known how to knock down the wall of separation, like Saint Francis of Assisi

and Rumi, a friar and a Sufi, two great spiritual figures: both of them were poets, wore the habit, chose poverty and founded a Confraternity. Rumi and Francis, though never having met each other, he said, had the love of God, respect for the human being, and a cosmic sympathy for all creatures in common.

An important guest speaker was Dr. Hamid Slimi, the minister of Muslim worship, dean of the Islamic Institute of Toronto, a scholar in law and compared religions, and the president of the Canadian Council of Imams.

Slimi spoke about the importance of dialogue cannot be better highlighted, in this time of fear and

mistrust, by religious leaders whose task is to reintegrate people into the great natural principles found in the Bible and the Koran, that is, that God is mercy and that His knowledge is light, grace and forgiveness.

Religion, he said, is only an instrument in order to remind everyone of a natural way that must be followed.

Father Amedeo Nardone, the Franciscan director of the Catholic weekly *Chiesa 2000*, then presented a very interesting and detailed contribution about the meeting between Saint Francis with the Sultan Malik al-Kamil, who in 1219 began dialogue with the Muslims, a dialogue then resumed by the Council which has now become an official praxis of the Church. ♦

## Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow



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