



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dal Canada con Amore

Italian and Jewish communities in Toronto join forces to aid victims of earthquake in Abruzzo

May 14, 2009 – The cooperation of two communities in Toronto will mean increased medical supplies for thousands of victims in the devastated areas of L’Aquila, Abruzzo.

Thanks to the leadership, initiative and generosity of Walter Arbib of Skylink Aviation, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, the Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee and the Abruzzo Earthquake Relief Fund will accept and send medicine valued at \$360,000 to Italy’s Protezione Civile Nazionale under the auspices of the Municipality of Rome for hospitals in areas of Abruzzo that suffered from the earthquake on April 6th.

A Libyan Italian Jew, Mr. Arbib found refuge in Italy at a young age and lived there for many years before moving to Israel and subsequently to Canada.

“I consider myself to be equally Italian and Jewish, and Canadian to boot,” states Mr. Arbib. “I feel this project is a unique opportunity to give back and assist the country that gave me and the community of Libyan Jews shelter after the expulsion from Libya in 1967, and a second chance all those years ago – a kind of friendship without borders.”

Other medicines also worth \$360,000 will be presented to the Abruzzo population at the same time by the Jewish Community in Italy under the auspices of SkyLink Air and Logistic Italy and the Rome Municipality.

This is not the first time the Jewish and Italian communities have collaborated. In 2004, Villa Charities and numerous Jewish groups celebrated the life of Giorgio Perlasca, an Italian credited with saving the lives of thousands of Jews in Hungary during World War II.

In fact, many small towns in the affected areas of Abruzzo such as Fossa, Ofena, and Casentino sheltered Jews from the Nazis.

“Our communities have enjoyed a long-standing friendship and our shared values dictate that we must protect the most vulnerable among us. The fact that Mr. Arbib was welcomed by Italy when he was forced to flee persecution as a Jew, is a testament to

those values and we are very pleased to play a role in helping those affected by the earthquake,” said UJA Federation Board Chair David Koschitzky.

“The Jewish community has a well-established tradition of extending a hand to those in need,” said David Katz, Chair of Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee. “We hope that this contribution will speed the recovery of those who have been affected by the earthquake.”

The medicine will be shipped to Abruzzo today and was selected and approved by the Italian government.

“On behalf of the thousands of people in Abruzzo who will heal faster and better because of this medicine, I thank Walter Arbib, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee for their kindness, leadership and humanity in time of need,” states Senator Con Di Nino, chair, AERF.

About AERF

The purpose of the Abruzzo Earthquake Relief Fund (AERF) is to receive funds which will be used to aid in the reconstruction of the areas most affected by the earthquake.

We are grateful to the organizations participating in AERF, including: Villa Charities family of organizations, Villa Colombo, VITA Community Living Services, Mens Sana, Columbus Centre, Villa Colombo Vaughan, in addition to Canadian Italian Business & Professional Association, Centro Scuola e Cultura Italiana, Italian Chamber of Commerce of Toronto, Associazione Culturale Abruzzo Canada, Casa Abruzzo, Order of Sons of Italy of Canada, Italian Canadian Savings and Credit Union, and other members and leaders of the Italian community.

For more information on AERF and to learn the many ways to donate, visit www.abruzzoearthquakerelieffund.ca.

About SkyLink

SkyLink, launched 25 years ago, is in the business of getting people and cargo where they need to go – on time, on budget, and safely – whether leasing a helicopter in Africa for food distribution and relief programs, or chartering the world’s largest aircraft (AN124) to move oversized cargo to remote sites around the world. SkyLink Aviation has become a leader in fast global deployment of food, peacekeepers and international humanitarian aid during war, major disasters and pandemics within fifty countries for clients such as the United Nations, World Food Programme, USAID, INS (Homeland Security), IOM, the Canadian Government, the Red Cross, the Italian Interior Ministry and other national governments and NGO’s.

In addition, SkyLink has performed numerous humanitarian evacuation flights in less than 12 hours notice. SkyLink operated several flights for the Canadian Government to help with Tsunami disaster relief in South East Asia carrying all humanitarian relief goods, equipments, medicines etc... SkyLink donated medicines worth \$1.2 million to

the Pakistan Prime Minister's Earthquake Relief Center for the disasters relief efforts. SkyLink has supported the Canadian government's relief efforts for the Manitoba floods, the Quebec ice storm. they operated flights carrying the Canadian DART troops to Pakistan for the recent earthquake crises. SkyLink donated maternity medicines to Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem together with ORP and Christian and Jewish organization.

About UJA

UJA Federation of Greater Toronto is the Jewish community's key fundraising, planning, allocations and infrastructure improvement organization - one of Canada's largest non-profit entities representing the most sizeable Jewish population in the country of 200,000 people. Through its beneficiary agencies, UJA Federation provides a multitude of social welfare and educational services.

About CJC Charities Committee

The Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee helps to foster a stronger Jewish community through a variety of charitable activities which support Jewish communal life. The Charities Committee works to develop educational, interfaith and inter-cultural opportunities for Canadian Jewry and strives for tolerance, understanding and goodwill among all segments of society in a multicultural Canada. The committee also works on humanitarian and social justice issues that affect the Jewish community and Canadian society at large.

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Media Inquiries:

Lori D'Amore
Villa Charities
416-789-7011 ext. 320
ldamore@villacharities.com

Sally Szuster
UJA Federation
416-840-2988
sszuster@ujafed.org