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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Picente, Roefaro Announce \$2 Million Project To Reduce Lead by Rehabilitating 190 Structures

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr. and Utica Mayor David Roefaro today announced that the City of Utica will receive a \$2 million grant as part of the federal stimulus package, opening a new chapter in the county-city partnership to reduce lead exposure in the City of Utica by funding efforts to abate lead in some 190 rental and owner occupied housing units.

“I am pleased we are already seeing the local benefits of the economic stimulus bill,” said Congressman Michael Arcuri. “For too long the City of Utica has struggled with the debilitating impact of lead paint contamination and this funding will help our community clean up lead paint hazards and make sure neighborhoods are safe for children and families. Since taking office, I have fought to help Utica secure funding to fight the lead scourge and I am glad this stimulus money was awarded so quickly.”

“Since my administration took office, we have worked in partnership with the city to focus the efforts of the Oneida County Health Department on addressing the menace of lead in housing,” Picente said. “The Lead Prevention Program we recently began is already helping to increase awareness, and this new project will be one more important way that our county-city partnership will improve the quality of life for people in the city of Utica. I want to thank Congressman Arcuri for his efforts to support this outstanding county-city partnership.”

The money will come from a 2008 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Lead Hazard Control grant recently re-funded as part of the Fiscal Stimulus Bill. The original grant application submitted by the City of Utica, The Oneida County Health Department’s Lead Primary Prevention Program and Gro-West, Inc. qualified for the award in November of 2008. The restoration of HUD funding to its original levels meant the City of Utica, with its high scoring grant application qualified for immediate funding.

“The scope and magnitude of so many challenges we face when addressing quality of life in our communities require the collaborative efforts of both county and city government partnered with the private sector,” Picente said. He added: “This grant reflects just such a collaboration, involving countless hours of work, the commitment of joint resources and the combined talents of dedicated professionals motivated by their passion for protecting the health of our children and sparing them the debilitating effects of lead poisoning.”

Utica Mayor David Roefaro stressed the impact of this grant goes beyond providing healthier environments for children living in the inner city. “The implementation of this grant will make significant repairs to a large number of housing units in the city, increasing property values and improving Utica’s tax base. Once the work begins, there will be a significant increase in employment opportunities for local contractors with the required lead training.”

As part of his expanded Lead Primary Prevention initiative, Picente recently announced a series of free training courses dealing with lead-safe work practices and designed for area contractors to meet new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards involving work done on pre-1978 housing.

Oneida County’s contribution to the grant process included matching funds including 60-thousand dollars and ‘value added’ services through its Lead Primary Prevention and Healthy Neighborhoods Programs which were designed to seamlessly compliment the city’s Lead-Safe Utica program. Those services include lead testing of newborns, free on-site lead inspections, dust wipe sampling and the training seminars for contractors and landlords on lead safe work practices.

“The dividends paid the Oneida County taxpayer in terms of savings by averting the long-term costs of medical and Social Services associated with meeting the needs of children affected by lead poisoning throughout their lifetimes is well worth the investment,” Picente said.

For more information on Lead Poisoning, Lead Recalls or lead Safe Work Practices contact the Oneida County Health Department’s Lead Primary Prevention Program at 266-6147 or visit our web site at www.ocgov.net and click on “Lead Recalls and Information.”