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**ALLENDALE COUPLE PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR SPIRITUAL CENTER
AT RAMAPO COLLEGE**

(Mahwah) – Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Salameno of Allendale, NJ have established the Salameno Challenge Grant at Ramapo College of New Jersey with a pledge of \$350,000 to support the construction of a Spiritual Center on the College campus. In gratitude for their commitment to the project and the spiritual lives of all members of the Ramapo College community, the building will be named the Lawrence and Theresa Salameno Spiritual Center. The Salameno's daughter, Francesca, recently graduated from Ramapo College and is pursuing a career in elementary education.

“The Lawrence and Theresa Salameno Spiritual Center will allow Ramapo College to expand its sense of community,” notes Dr. Peter Mercer, president of Ramapo College. “A campus community provides means to discuss and debate and to engage and empower. The Spiritual Center will offer opportunities for members of our community to have honest interfaith dialogue, to explore values and the search for meaning.”

The Spiritual Center will provide a place where students of any background can practice their faith, gather to discuss ethical matters and seek refuge for quiet contemplation. “In this troubled world it is important for young adults to have a place for contemplation and meditation,” says Theresa Salameno. Adds her husband, Lawrence, “We believe people of all faiths should be able to utilize a space where they can come together to better understand each other's beliefs.”

It is anticipated that a number of Ramapo College student organization will use the facility. “The Center will meet the very important needs of student organizations such as Hillel, Catholics at Ramapo United, the Muslim Students Association, the Campus Crusade for Christ and the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship,” says Dr. Pamela Bischoff, vice president of student

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affairs. “Many of our students now closely link their religious and spiritual development with voluntary service. I imagine that organizations like the Community Builders Coalition, Ebony Women for Social Change and Brothers Making A Difference will find the Center a wonderful place in which to conduct some of their activities.”

The impetus for the Spiritual Center came from Dr. Anthony T. Padovano, a distinguished professor of literature and philosophy at Ramapo College, who’s had a longstanding interest in seeing the project come to fruition.

According to *The Catholic Advocate*, college administrators, educators and researchers are noticing an increased interest in spirituality on campuses. Part of the reason may be due to the transition from youth to adulthood, accompanied by a search for meaning and identity. There is also a desire on college campuses to breach the gap between believers of different faiths with respect, understanding and compassion. The events of 9/11 also play a role believes Father Ron Stanley, O.P., Catholic campus minister and director of campus ministries at Ramapo College. “Students need a place to go, a place to pray, a sacred space to worship. The spiritual needs of students should be met as much as any other part of their student life.”

“We are grateful for the generosity, support and enthusiasm the Salamenos have exhibited for this project, which will benefit the Ramapo College community for years to come,” says Cathy Davey, vice president for Institutional Advancement and executive director of the Ramapo College Foundation. “The first \$100,00 of the Salameno gift will cover the costs of design development for the Center, program and schematic drawings, cost estimates, contract drawings and code review. The Ramapo College Foundation will raise at least an additional \$350,000 from private donors.”

The Salameno Challenge Grant will be used as an incentive to donors to make a gift or pledge to the Center; the challenge period will run through November 2006. It is expected the project will cost \$1 million to complete. In addition to the Challenge Grant, Mr. and Mrs. Salameno have also made substantial donations to support history education through The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, VA and to build a new library at St. Gregory’s Catholic Grammar School in Dorchester, MA.

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