

Anguilla looks to replicate White Plains success

When the Caribbean island of Anguilla opened its first-ever tourism office in White Plains last year, it reasoned it could boost its number of American visitors by drawing affluent tourists from Westchester County.

The Anguilla Tourist Board says it met that objective during the first year of operating its office at 246 Central Ave. The number of American visitors to the British dependency rose 13 percent in the year ending March 31, to 73,637.

And this year, Anguilla is expected to attract ***HOW MANY percent more

tourists from the United States, in part because the island will open its first 18-hole golf course, a Greg Norman-designed venue framed by the Caribbean's first St. Regis hotel, and will host the Tranquility Jazz Festival from Nov. 9-13.

"Westchester lends itself to people who can afford to travel to Anguilla. That was a consideration in our decision to open our office in the county," said Marie Walker, Anguilla's full-time regional representative.

Walker will join Victor Franklin Banks, Anguilla's minister of finance, economic

development, investments and tourism, in celebrating the success of the three-person White Plains office when he visits the county seat this week. Walker and city Mayor Joseph M. Delfino will co-host a special anniversary dinner on Tuesday (June 7) at The Women's Club of White Plains, 305 Ridgeway.

Tourism by affluent travelers has been a linchpin of Anguilla's economy since the 1970s, accounting for 30 percent of the country's gross domestic product and 60 percent of its total work force.

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Number of families spending more than half their income on housing increases

In just over half a decade, the number of America's working families paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing has grown by 76 percent, according to a new study. The Housing Landscape for America's Working Families 2005, conducted by the Center for Housing Policy, the research affiliate of the National Housing Conference.

In 1997, 2.4 million working families spent more than half their income on housing. By 2003, this number had grown dramatically to 4.2 million.

Working families are defined as low- to moderate-income families that work the equivalent of a full-time job and earn from the minimum wage of \$10,700 and up to 120 percent of the median income in their

Williams said Anguilla does not track how many Americans come from Westchester and Fairfield County, Conn., but believes the northern suburbs accounted for the bulk of the increase in U.S. tourists based on anecdotal evidence like the phone numbers of potential travelers and the number of walk-ins to the tourist board's three-person office.

"Our office allows us to take advantage of both the foot traffic and vehicular traffic on Central Avenue," one of Westchester's most-traveled roads, Walker said.

Walker says the White Plains office is a model the island will replicate elsewhere in the nation. Later this year it will open a second tourist office in a suburban locale, either within the Washington D.C. area or further south.

— By ALEX PHILIPPIDIS