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MEDIA RELEASE

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Creativity for Peace Presents Talk by 2009 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish to Speak about Peace between Palestinians and Israelis
on October 27 at James A. Little Theater

The 2009 Nobel Peace Prize nominee Izzeldin Abuelaish, M.D., a well-known Palestinian physician and peace activist working in both Gaza and Israel, will speak for the first time in New Mexico at 7 p.m. on October 27 at the James A. Little Theater in Santa Fe. His talk, "Forgiveness: An Engine for the Peace Journey," will focus on the conflict in the Middle East and his ongoing work for peace in the region.

In January of 2009, Dr. Abuelaish lost three daughters, Bessan 20; Mayar 15; and Aya 14 and a niece, Nour, 17, when Israeli forces shelled his home in Gaza. Another daughter, Shatha, 17, as well as a niece and two brothers, were severely wounded in the attack. Bessan attended Creativity for Peace's summer camp in New Mexico in 2003 and 2004, while Shatha participated in 2004.

In addition to the loss of his three daughters, Dr. Abuelaish's wife passed away in September 2008 from cancer. Bessan encouraged her father to go back to work after her mother's death and became the mother to her seven younger sisters and brothers.

"It is so important to me as a father that my children do not grow up with hate in their hearts. When she attended the Creativity for Peace camp, Bessan learned about reconciliation and about the other and wanted to be remembered as a peacemaker," said Dr. Abuelaish. "Now, I have to set an example for my other children and show them that we must never lose hope."

In the spring of 2009, Dr. Abuelaish established Abuelaish Daughters International (formerly Daughters for Life), a foundation to provide scholarships and opportunities for women and girls in the fields of education and health as, he says, “it is time for women to take the lead.”

“We are honored to have Dr. Abuelaish speak in Santa Fe. We are inspired by his courageous work to unite Palestinians and Israelis and his determination to take such devastating events and to turn them into something positive in memory of his beautiful daughters,” said Dottie Indyke, Creativity for Peace executive director. “His message of respect, forgiveness, and humanity between Palestinians and Israelis takes on even greater significance in light of the tragedies in his own family.”

Dr. Abuelaish has worked for more than 20 years as an obstetrician and gynecologist in both Gaza and Israel. He currently serves as associate professor of the Dala Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, Canada. Previously he was a senior researcher at the Gertner Institute and a physician at the Soroka Medical Center, both located in Israel. He attended medical school at the University of Cairo and specialized in OB/GYN at the University of London. He sub-specialized in fetal medicine and genetics in Italy and Belgium and received his Masters degree in public health from Harvard University.

Since 2003, Creativity for Peace (www.creativityforpeace.com) has organized 11 summer camps outside Santa Fe, NM with a total of 146 young women. The program continues year-round with gatherings and leadership training in the Middle East.

Creativity for Peace’s mission is to nurture understanding and leadership in Palestinian and Israeli adolescent girls and women so that they aspire to and take on significant roles in their families, communities, and countries that advance peaceful coexistence. Programs include the three-week summer camp; ongoing gatherings for 146 former campers in the Middle East; advanced communication and leadership training for 30 young leaders; and academic scholarships.

Dr. Abuelaish’s talk takes place Tuesday, October 27 at 7 p.m. at the James A. Little Theater. Reserved seats are \$20. Tickets may be purchased at www.tickets.com or the Lensic box office, 505.988.1234.

In addition, there is a private reception with Dr. Abuelaish at the Santa Fe home of John and Brenda Midyette on October 26. Tickets are \$150 per person and can be purchased through the Creativity for Peace reservation line at 505-466-2700. Tickets for the reception also include reserved seats at the October 27 talk.

The public may call 505-466-2700 for additional information.

These events are sponsored by Sue Barnum, the B. Wyckliffe and Libby S. Pattishall Endowment Fund at the Santa Fe Community Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, Belinda Ruffel, Jane Clayton Oakes and Joyce and Mohammed Salhoot.