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peace

MEDIA RELEASE

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Palestinian and Israeli Girls Learn Peace in Santa Fe Public Invited to Meet Participants at August 3 Event

For the eighth year Creativity for Peace will bring young Israeli and Palestinian women, ages 15-17 of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, to Santa Fe, New Mexico for a peace camp centered on dialogue, artmaking, field trips and social time.

The camp takes place from July 17 through August 6 on rural land 20 miles southeast of Santa Fe. Sixteen first-time campers will take part, as well as four young leaders – girls who have attended camp in the past and who serve as junior counselors. Participants include teens from Sderot and other villages in southern Israel on the border of Gaza that are daily attacked by Qassam rockets; from an intentional Arab-Jewish town in Israel; from Jabalia camp in Gaza, as well as other cities, towns, and kibbutzim in the West Bank and Israel.

Since 2003, Creativity for Peace has organized 11 summer camps with a total of 146 participants. The program continues year-round with gatherings and leadership training in the Middle East.

Camp programs include:

- Daily dialogue sessions led by trained facilitators from the Middle East that teach compassionate listening, nonviolent communication, and other techniques that

encourage the sharing of personal experience, often of the deaths of loved ones, and encourage connection and understanding.

- Daily artmaking sessions, led by art therapists and professional artists from the Santa Fe area, which promote collaboration, personal expression, and emotional healing through sculpture, painting, printmaking, photography, and other artistic genres.
- Field trips, such as the ropes course at the Santa Fe Mountain Center, cooking class with chef Johnny Vee, and circus workshop with the women's troupe Wise Fool New Mexico, that further bonding and self-empowerment. For the second year, the girls will attend a private dinner and dress rehearsal at the Santa Fe Opera.

On **Tuesday, August 3**, Creativity for Peace campers and young leaders will read from their writing about their lives back home in Israel and Palestine, their experience at camp, and their dreams of peace. They will be accompanied by 19 year-old violinist Leticia Gonzales, a graduate of the Santa Fe Youth Symphony program and a music student at the University of New Mexico. The public is invited to meet these young women at 7 p.m. at the James A. Little Theater, 1060 Cerrillos Road. Details on this event are forthcoming.

About her reasons for wanting to attend Creativity for Peace's summer camp this year, Elya, a Jewish Israeli from a kibbutz in southern Israel, says, "It is important for me to do everything I can to stop the suffering between us and Palestinians. I want peace and I know we can achieve it with dialogue. If we know each other, maybe we won't hate so much."

Dina, a young woman from Beit Sahour in the West Bank, says, "Young people from both sides should meet to understand each other and to realize that they have common wishes and dreams to live in peace, security, and economic prosperity. I wish that peace education would become a subject in Palestinian and Israeli schools in order to create a culture of love and tolerance, instead of hatred and violence."

The four young leaders to attend the 2010 summer program include Dima, a Palestinian living in Israel; Maya, a Jewish Israeli, who has obtained leave from her top-security position with the Israeli military; Mai, who lives in Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salaam, an intentional Arab-Jewish community in Israel, and is the daughter of a Palestinian and a Jew; and Nahida, a Palestinian from the West Bank, who writes that "When I first applied to Creativity for Peace I had lots of suffering to share. I didn't know that this camp would be a turning point. After camp I realized

that I can be one of the people who can try to achieve that high, hard thing called peace.” All four girls attend Creativity for Peace’s leadership training workshops in the Middle East.

“Israeli and Palestinian girls have few, if any, opportunities to get to know each other back home,” notes Dottie Indyke, executive director. “They come to New Mexico with curiosity, rage, fear, grief, and hope. What they don’t anticipate is how their beliefs and stereotypes will shatter. Sharing their tragic stories of death and violence, their pain transforms into compassion and even love. Their new friendships, empowerment, and commitment to peacemaking endure.”

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 40 young leaders; and academic scholarships.

Interviews and photographs with campers and staff can be arranged with advance notice. A 14-minute film about the program is also available. Please contact Dottie Indyke, Creativity for Peace, at 982-3765 or dottie@creativityforpeace.com. Visit our website at www.creativityforpeace.com.

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