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peace

MEDIA RELEASE

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Palestinian and Israeli Girls Begin Work for Peace in New Mexico Public Invited to Meet Participants at “Feast for Peace” on August 2

For the ninth 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 an intensive summer reconciliation and peacemaking camp centered on dialogue, artmaking, field trips and social time.

The 2011 camp, which is the 12th such program since 2003, takes place from July 15 through August 5 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 the northern Galilee, Haifa, and small villages throughout Israel, including the southern area near the border of Gaza that are daily attacked by Qassam rockets, as well as West Bank towns such as Jericho and Ramallah.

Creativity for Peace’s summer program is the entry point for young women interested in peacemaking and leadership building. Camp programs include:

- Daily dialogue sessions led by trained facilitators from Israel/Palestine 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, self-expression and understanding.

- Daily artmaking sessions, led by art therapists and professional artists from the Santa Fe area, which promote collaboration 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 and circus workshop with the women’s troupe Wise Fool New Mexico, which promote bonding and self-empowerment. Other experiences include a visit from the Wildlife Center and a private dinner and dress rehearsal at the Santa Fe Opera.

On **Tuesday, August 2**, Creativity for Peace offers the public an opportunity to meet the 20 young women in its summer program at “Feast for Peace: a cultural celebration of the Middle East.” The evening features Middle Eastern food from Pyramid Café, Tribes, Nile Café, Zia Diner, Cleopatra Café, Jamba, and other local restaurants and private chefs; live music from the Albuquerque band, Sadaqah, and Middle Eastern dancing by Joan Kafri and her teenage students. Four young leaders from Israel and Palestine will give a talk about their life experiences and peace work, and attendees will together dance the *hora* (the national dance of Israel) and the popular Palestinian *debka*. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. at the Santa Fe Woman’s Club, 1616 Old Pecos Trail. Admission is \$15 at the door, cash or check only. For further information about this event, email info@creativityforpeace.com.

The following are excerpts from applications submitted by Israeli and Palestinian girls about their reasons for wanting to attend Creativity for Peace’s summer camp this year:

“I want to come to remove my fear. The occupation is like the scary dark. I hope we can build trust in each other.” – Miriam, Jenin, West Bank

“I am 16 years old and I have suffered from the rockets since first grade. I want to meet the people, not the stereotype. I want to know how they feel and what is hurting them and tell them that we feel this pain too.” –Daniel, Kibbutz Ruhama, Israel

“Living with the thought that I am not safe is very hard. I feel that peace can only be achieved if both sides start listening to each other and start making sacrifices.” –Hazar, Umm al Fahm, Israel

“Palestine is cut to pieces. There is a huge wall and checkpoints that separate us. I think camp will help us to understand the real thing, learn about the conflict, know the truth and if we begin as teens it will be a key for peace.” –Janan, Jericho, West Bank

The four young leaders working at this year’s summer camp include:

- Sivan, a Jewish Israeli who attended Creativity for Peace camp in 2005, worked as a young leader in 2006 and completed her service as an officer in the Israeli military. She returns as a senior young leader after five years away.
- Aya, a Palestinian living in Israel who attended camp in 2006 and left the organization in 2009 because of her rage over the war in Gaza. She returns as a senior young leader after a year away.
- Zoey, a Jewish Israeli, and Muna, a Palestinian from the West Bank, who return to New Mexico for the first time since attending camp in 2008.

“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 fear, anger, grief, curiosity and hope. What they don’t anticipate is how their beliefs will shatter and how much commonality they discover in their so-called “enemy”. 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 for the rest of their lives.”

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. The organization, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico and in Israel, organizes the three-week summer camp, ongoing gatherings for 162 former campers in the Middle East and year-round communication and leadership training for 35 young leaders. Nine young women from Gaza, the West Bank and Israel have received university 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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