

## Girls getting together — for sake of peace

By | The New Mexican

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Amid the bloody-mindedness of the militants and politicians making Palestine and Israel the armed camps they've been for 60 years, Santa Fe for the past six years has been an island of calm where young women from both sides have gathered for a time of mutual understanding.

It's another of the many amazing things that go on in this community, year in and year out, in the sunshine and shadows beyond the Plaza: academic gatherings, artistic advancement and counseling of all kinds.

Creativity for Peace is the name of this promising effort at grass-roots diplomacy.

It's a modest operation: So far, nearly 100 Israelis and Palestinians, of Christian, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds, most of them in their teens, have been brought to this place so distant from the walls, the gates, the barbed wire and (shudder) the rocket, artillery and suicide-bombing attacks that are a numbing reality in their communities.

On a campus out east of town, seven or so girls at a time meet the enemy: seven or so *other* girls — who, perhaps, aren't the enemy after all.

Guided by a handful who've already been through the two-a-summer camps, they talk — and listen: about the tragedy they've seen, the loved ones lost, the hopes they might have for an end to the violence.

And they do art, led by professional art therapists, gaining notions not only of collaboration, but also of personal expression by way of the paintbrush, the sculpting clay, the printmaking process, the photography.

There's a cooking class with John Vollertsen. There's a circus workshop with Wise Fool. There's — dare we say it? — bonding.

It's a couple of weeks' respite from a daily grind of the kind our kids can't imagine. It's a trip to an America too often portrayed as an affluent nation of bunglers — or, worse, warmongers.

But better yet, the Santa Fe-based, overseas-supplemented group offers follow-through when the girls get back home, with gatherings of the campers and training in leadership and communications.

Its mission is a worthy one: nurturing what they hope will be generations of peacemakers; young women with enhanced compassion — and shared experience in a neutral and wide-open setting.

In late July, Creativity for Peace invites fellow Santa Feans to meet our guests — and to see the documentary film *Encounter Point*, which won top honors at the 2006 San Francisco Film Festival. More about that on our news pages as the event draws nearer.

At a time when one of our presidential candidates shows the willingness of so many past presidents to talk with "the enemy" — while the other candidate chides him and rattles sabers — we find something especially encouraging about this local effort.

We salute Santa Fean Dottie Indyke of Creativity for Peace, her overseas colleagues and her contract workers here, as well as more than 100 volunteers in our community who, with the help of some charitable foundations and many individual donors, are taking these person-to-person steps toward peace.