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El Camino College to Sponsor Peace Festival

El Camino College and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) will sponsor a free “peace festival” at 1 p.m. Sept. 9 on the Torrance campus, 16007 Crenshaw Boulevard.

The event is designed to showcase the various peace efforts happening at El Camino College and will feature a lineup of award-winning choral groups and a visit from David J. Smith, a senior program officer of the USIP.

Titled “Ambassadors of Harmony: a Festival of Peace,” the event is built on the idea that music is the “universal language,” and is a great venue to effectively build bridges of peace and harmony.

Organizing the event is Joanna Medawar Nacheff, director of choral activities at El Camino College. Nacheff is presenting the festival in conjunction with a grant she received to attend the USIP Seminar on Global Security and Peace this past May.

The “Ambassadors of Harmony” is also the name Nacheff gave her groups when they performed at Carnegie Hall in May 2007. She composed an original fanfare under the same name that will be premiered at the peace festival by all the choral groups.

The festival will also showcase the various El Camino College programs designed to promote peace-building strategies and world harmony. The college’s Global Education Through Technology program (GETT) has been recognized as a model for long-distance communication that connects El Camino College students with their peers around the globe through live video-conferencing in many disciplines such as music, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and ESL. Established in 2004, the program was initiated by the State Department. El Camino College was the only community college in the nation that succeeded in pioneering this innovative approach of building bridges of understanding and tolerance for students around the world.

Another grant helped the GETT program expand and has brought even more solid connections with universities in places such as Italy, Ukraine, Poland, Australia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Lebanon. Through these relationships, El Camino College hosted the Notre Dame University choir from Lebanon in May 2007 with a concert tour. The ECC Chorale and Notre Dame Chorale had performed for each other during the previous semesters via video-conferencing.

The in-person visit solidified the relationship and now both groups continue to correspond and communicate through text messaging and e-mail.

Choral groups to perform include: the ECC Chorale, the ECC Concert Choir, ECC Voce Angelicus, Los Cancioneros Master Chorale, and the Ellis-Orpheus Men's Chorus. All are directed by Nacheff.

Nacheff is an award-winning professor and choral director who has twice conducted in Carnegie Hall and has toured the world, conducting performing groups. In addition to serving as director of choral activities at El Camino College, she is also on the faculty of California State University, Dominguez Hills, the California Academy of Mathematics and Science, and is the artistic Director for Los Cancioneros Master Chorale. As a church musician, Nacheff served as minister of music at Peninsula Community Church from 1980 to 1997, and is now choir director.

Among her many awards, Nacheff was honored by the City of Torrance Cultural Arts Commission with the "2005 Excellence in Arts Award" in music. This past April, she received the 2008 Daily Breeze Director's Award for "Making a Difference" in the South Bay.

El Camino College administrators, faculty and staff are expected to attend, in addition to area dignitaries and officials.