



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Contact: John LaBrie, Executive Director

World Affairs Council of Maine

Telephone: 207-780-4552

[jlabrie@wacmaine.org](mailto:jlabrie@wacmaine.org)

[www.wacmaine.org](http://www.wacmaine.org)

**Seeds of Peace is awarded the  
2009 International Leadership Award by the  
World Affairs Council of Maine**

The World Affairs Council of Maine is pleased to announce Seeds of Peace has been selected for the 2009 International Leadership Award. This award, established by the Council in 2008 and first awarded to Senator George J. Mitchell, honors the achievements of an individual or organization from Maine or with Maine ties demonstrating outstanding leadership in the global arena.. The 2009 International Leadership Award will be presented to Seeds of Peace at a gala celebration in Portland during the early part of the summer.

According to John LaBrie, Executive Director of the World Affairs Council of Maine, Seeds of Peace epitomizes the best Maine has to offer to a global community dealing with ethnic and cultural clashes. “Seeds of Peace is an outstanding public diplomacy organization that has been focused on the peaceful resolution of conflict for over a decade and their model should be emulated and celebrated. For Maine, this is yet another amazing example of how our state has a disproportionate influence on a global map.”

Founded in 1993 by journalist John Wallach, Seeds of Peace began in the pristine woods of Maine as the Seeds of Peace International Camp, established to bring together young leaders from conflict-torn regions around the world. Seeds of Peace provides a safe and supportive setting where young leaders from regions of conflict are empowered with the leadership skills required to advance reconciliation and create peaceful coexistence. Over the last decade, Seeds of Peace has intensified its impact, dramatically increasing the number of participants, represented nations and programs.

From 46 Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian teenagers in 1993, the organization still focuses on the Middle East but has expanded its programming to include young leaders from South Asia, Cyprus and the Balkans. Its leadership network now encompasses nearly 4,000 young people from several major conflict regions. Currently, the organization is actively working in the Middle East and South Asia. -more-

## **Seeds of Peace awarded International Leadership Award... (page 2)**

After years of focusing exclusively on international crises raging around the globe, in 2000 Seeds of Peace developed a domestic initiative called "The Portland Project" to address the violence erupting in its own backyard between Americans living in Portland, Maine. Since then the program has expanded to include other cities in Maine and is now called "Maine Seeds."

A short drive from Seeds of Peace International Camp, Portland and Lewiston are now two of the largest refugee resettlement cities in the United States. As a result of a large influx of African and Asian immigrants in recent years, Portland and Lewiston have witnessed a sudden surge in racial and ethnic tension. As city officials and educators began to grapple with the problem, they turned to Seeds of Peace for assistance.

Maine Seeds participants reflect the diversity and complexity of the urban population; African-American and white teenagers, and immigrants from Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, Vietnam and Cambodia. Candidates are drawn from middle schools in the cities and are chosen with the consent of the local school boards through a series of interviews and an essay contest. American facilitators conduct daily conflict resolution sessions that confront the issues of race, religion, culture and economic disparity that are fueling the violence in the cities. To date, over 100 Maine youth have participated in the program.

The International Leadership award will be formally presented to Seeds of Peace at a gala celebration in Portland in the early part of the summer.

For additional information contact: John LaBrie, Executive Director

World Affairs Council of Maine

Telephone: 207-780-4552

[jlabrie@wacmaine.org](mailto:jlabrie@wacmaine.org)

[www.wacmaine.org](http://www.wacmaine.org)

***The World Affairs Council of Maine is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public membership organization dedicated to bringing issues of international importance into focus through the presentation of world leaders and opinion makers at its public programs, business briefings, schools and special events.***

###