

The Echo Foundation

NEWS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathy Rowan, 704.338.7219 or krowan@cpwadv.com
Sarah Mabus, 704.347.3844 or EchoFoundation@aol.com
Marcia Merrill, 704.364.0084 or marcia@redRovercommunications.com

Elie Wiesel to Return to Charlotte on March 27, 2007, for The Echo Foundation's 10th Anniversary and *Voices Against Indifference Initiative*

*Applications for High School Students to Travel
"In the Footsteps of Elie Wiesel"
Available at EchoFoundation.org; Deadline 11/20/06*

Charlotte, N.C., Oct. 17, 2006 –The Echo Foundation will welcome back co-founder and honorary chairperson Elie Wiesel, 1986 Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor for the *Voices Against Indifference Initiative*. This annual program of The Echo Foundation features speakers whose life's work illustrates how one person can make a difference to benefit humanity and change the world. (For a photo of Wiesel, go to http://www.echofoundation.org/a_decade_inspired_by_elie_wiesel.htm)

A Decade Inspired by Elie Wiesel, presented by The Leon Levine Foundation: Sandra and Leon Levine, is the 2006-2007 theme, celebrating Wiesel's life-affirming work around the world as well as his contributions to the Charlotte community.

Echo president and co-founder Stephanie Ansaldo says, "We are developing a far-reaching and inclusive educational program to radiate throughout our region. Highlights will include a dialogue with area high school students, a public lecture, and leadership forums that advance Elie Wiesel's message of human dignity, justice and moral courage," she adds.

A key element of the initiative is "In the Footsteps of Elie Wiesel," an educational travel and leadership program for high school students that allows participants to experience the challenges, opportunities and environments that have shaped the life and work of Wiesel. The students will trace Wiesel's path from his birthplace, Sighet, Romania, to the Auschwitz death camp in Poland where he and his family were taken, and to Paris, where he was given refuge and began his studies after the war.

The group will also visit Berlin, to experience the Holocaust memorial and museum. They will study the model of reparation and relationship healing with the Jewish people that stands today as an extraordinary example of understanding, cooperation and friendship.

Participants will serve as community Ambassadors for the year-long Elie Wiesel Project, charged with the task of promoting positive social action here in the greater Charlotte community. They will have dedicated time with Wiesel during his trip to Charlotte in March.

Applications are available online at www.EchoFoundation.org. Scholarships are available. The application deadline is Nov. 20, 2006. Travel will take place in July 2007.

Other key components of the educational programs being offered are:

- **Curriculum Guide:** This tool for learning about the life and work of Nobel Laureate for Peace, Elie Wiesel, includes his biography, bibliography, filmography, web links to relevant projects and sites, and articles written by and about him. It was developed by students and faculty advisors, and is available in schools and online at www.EchoFoundation.org free of charge.
- **Art & Photography Contests:** To demonstrate how one person can make a difference, Echo offers an Art & Photography contest for middle and high school students. Given a challenge statement that reflects the work of Elie Wiesel, students respond creatively using art or photography to express their view of social justice. Entry forms are available at www.EchoFoundation.org. Application deadline is Monday, March 5, 2007.
- **Essay & Poetry Contests in French & English:** Students are invited to use the written word to document their views on issues of memory and social justice. Since Elie Wiesel writes in French, Echo offers the contest in both French and English. Entry forms are available at www.EchoFoundation.org. Application deadline is Monday, March 5, 2007.
- **High School Holocaust Museums:** Area high school students and faculty will be invited to meet with Holocaust survivors, rescuers and liberators as they study World War II and the Holocaust. As a culmination, students will be challenged to create a Holocaust Museum in their own school. There will be a competition from which winners receive tickets to the public lecture.
- **Student Tolerance Day:** More than 1,000 students from across the county will gather in preparation for their Student Dialogue with Elie Wiesel. Activities designed by and for students will teach about the critical issues of peace, intervention, justice and understanding. Student participants will explore their own responsibility for humankind here and around the globe.
- **Student Dialogue:** As the culmination of their year-long, in-depth studies of the work and life of Elie Wiesel, high school students from across the region will have the unique opportunity to present their urgent, informed questions to this Nobel Laureate for Peace. More than 1,000 students from across the county will engage in a two-hour dialogue with Wiesel at Myers Park High School.

- **Film Festival:** In preparation for the visit of Elie Wiesel to Charlotte, the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County will hold a film series with discussions focusing on the issues of justice, peace and human dignity, pivotal to the work and life of Elie Wiesel. Free and open to the public. Dates to be announced.
- **Student Choir:** The Charlotte Children's Choir and Cantors from the synagogues in Charlotte will collaborate to form a chorus to celebrate the visit of Elie Wiesel and to share with the greater Charlotte community the music that is essential to the Jewish people and significant in the life of Professor Wiesel.
- **Public Lecture:** This event, featuring Elie Wiesel, will be held March 27, 2007 at the Blumenthal Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets will be available as of Dec. 1, 2006. More information will be announced later this fall.

About Elie Wiesel

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania, now part of Romania. At age 15, he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister perished, his two older sisters survived. Wiesel and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945.

After the war, Wiesel studied in Paris and later became a journalist. During an interview with the distinguished French writer, Francois Mauriac, he was persuaded to write about his experiences in the death camps. The result was his internationally acclaimed memoir, "La Nuit" or "Night," which has since been translated into more than thirty languages. The most recent translation, by his wife, Marion, is based on the French edition, first published in 1958. The new translation was selected by Oprah Winfrey for her television book club in January 2006. The publisher is Hill & Wang.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter appointed Wiesel as Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. In 1980, he became the Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. He is also the Founding President of the Paris-based Universal Academy of Cultures and the Chairman of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, an organization he and his wife created to fight indifference, intolerance and injustice. He has received more than 100 honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning.

A devoted supporter of Israel, Wiesel has also defended the cause of Soviet Jews, Nicaragua's Miskito Indians, Argentina's Desaparecidos, Cambodian refugees, the Kurds, victims of famine and genocide in Africa, victims of apartheid in South Africa, and victims of war in the former Yugoslavia. For more than 10 years, Elie and his wife Marion have been especially devoted to the cause of Ethiopian-born Israeli youth through the Foundation's Beit Tzipora Centers for Study and Enrichment.

Teaching has always been central to Wiesel’s work. Since 1976, he has been the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, where he is a member of the faculty in the Department of Religion as well as the Department of Philosophy. Previously, he served as Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the City University of New York (1972-76) and the first Henry Luce Visiting Scholar in Humanities and Social Thought at Yale University (1982-83).

He is the author of more than 40 books of fiction and non-fiction, including “A Beggar in Jerusalem” (Prix Médicis winner), “The Testament” (Prix Livre Inter winner), “The Fifth Son” (winner of the Grand Prize in Literature from the City of Paris), and two volumes of his memoirs.

For his literary and human rights activities, he has received numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal and the Medal of Liberty Award, and the rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honor. In 1986, Elie Wiesel won the Nobel Prize for Peace, and soon after, Marion and Elie Wiesel established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. An American citizen since 1963, Elie Wiesel lives in New York with his wife and son.

About The Echo Foundation

The Echo Foundation was founded in 1997 to carry on the message Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel brought to Charlotte that year – a call to action for human dignity, justice and moral courage. The Echo Foundation brings speakers and programs to Charlotte that illustrate how one person can make a difference for humanity through its *Voices Against Indifference Initiative*. Last year, five internationally renowned Nobel Laureates in science and medicine visited Charlotte for a series of educational programs and community forums. Previous Echo speakers also include Doctors without Borders founder Bernard Kouchner, Harvard Afro-American Studies Department Chairman Henry Louis Gates Jr., Columbia Earth Institute Director Jeffrey Sachs, Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, human rights advocate Kerry Kennedy Cuomo, and Chinese dissident Harry Wu.

For additional information about The Echo Foundation and upcoming programs, visit www.EchoFoundation.org or call 704.347.3844.

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