



PEACE INITIATIVES INSTITUTE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GRASSROOTS WORK WITH CHILDREN SUPPORTS PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Boulder, CO – May 7, 2007 – Political leaders in Northern Ireland prepare to reinstate the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont the week of May 7, 2007, thus ending years of political and social conflict in that country. Meanwhile, the efforts of a small Colorado-based non-profit continue to be visible throughout Northern Ireland teaching children and their parents to respect difference.

The Media Initiative For Children (MIFC)TM programme was launched in Northern Ireland in 2003 by a Boulder, Colorado based charity called the Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii). Pii partnered with NIPPA - The Early Years Organization in Northern Ireland and a group of 13 in-country advisors to develop a programme which teaches young children the benefits of respecting others who are different from themselves.

MIFC has used short television cartoons along with classroom instruction to reach over 9,000 preschool children with messages about respecting physical, racial, and religious or any other differences that might provoke bullying or discriminatory behaviour.

To date, MIFC and NIPPA have also trained over 450 preschool teachers to help deliver their message. The teacher's extensive training has been a critical part of the programme's success in that the teachers must examine their own personal histories to enable them to better deliver the curriculum to the children.

Research conducted by Paul Connolly of Queens University on more than 1,000 children involved in the MIFC programme has shown that the programme is effective. Connolly's research has confirmed that children are likely to exclude others who are different. Yet after being exposed to the messages they become more aware of the negative emotions experienced by someone who is excluded because they are different and subsequently, are more willing to accept and include them.

In November 2006, a new MIFC module on anti-bullying was jointly sponsored by the Northern Ireland Commissioner of Children and Young people (NICCY) and the Ombudsman For Children in the Republic, making the MIFC a cross border programme.

Peace Initiatives Institute, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is expanding its grassroots peace building work with preschool children to other countries including Scotland and Kosovo and to media such the Internet. Pii welcomes and greatly appreciates supporting alliances and any financial donations and aid in the mission.

For more information on this subject and the Pii and MIFC organizations, please visit www.pii-mifc.org and contact Theresa Szczurek, Development Director or Paul W. Harris, Executive Director at the following:

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