



## **SIXTY GREEK AND TURKISH CYPRIOT TEENS SPEND ONE MONTH IN THE UNITED STATES TO HELP FIND COMMON GROUND AND BUILD LIFE LONG FRIENDSHIPS**

Washington, DC – July 9, 2013 — This week 60 Greek and Turkish Cypriot students arrived in the United States to embark on a month-long respite from the political tensions that have wracked the divided island of Cyprus for 39 years. The Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP), a year-long peace building and leadership program established five years ago in Cyprus, promotes peaceful interaction and understanding between the two communities.

Taking a page from the Children’s Friendship Project of Northern Ireland (CFPNI), CFP offers Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking Cypriot teens an opportunity to get to know each other in the U.S, on neutral ground, where many differing cultures live together in peace.

“Our goal in placing pairs of teens — one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot — with each host family in one of five participating areas in the U.S., Portland, OR, Atlanta, GA, Maryland, Northern Virginia, and New Hampshire, is to promote friendship and understanding through interaction and to further develop leadership skills,” says Cassie Cleverly, U.S. program director. “While in the U.S. the students participate in community service projects, team building activities, environmental workshops and social events which include their host families and friends. These shared experiences give the teens a strong foundation upon which to build long term friendships between these future leaders of the two Cypriot communities. They are roommates for an intense month, and become friends for life.”

To date, over 200 teens have participated in the program. They range in age from 15-17 and are selected by a bi-communal team of volunteer Cypriot Coordinators in February of each year. Before their trip to the U.S., selected teens become a formal “pair” and participate in activities that involve their families, beginning the process of building trust between the two communities. To celebrate the connections formed during the summer and transition the teens to a more responsible role in the program, CFP holds a

graduation ceremony in October for friends and family of the teens.

“Although we are a young program, we can already see that the seeds planted by CFP are taking root. Past participants report that they are still in contact with their former “room mates” and continue to meet and maintain their friendships both with their partners and the groups,” says Cleverly.

### **About the Cyprus Friendship Program**

The Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP) is an all-volunteer, non profit, 501(c)3 people-to-people program that focuses on fostering trust and understanding through interactions between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus. CFP is not affiliated with any governmental, political, or religious organization. It takes no position on any proposed political approaches toward the future of Cyprus. Rather, it is based on the belief that, no matter what, the future of Cyprus will be enhanced by increased trust, understanding, and friendship between the future leaders of the Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking communities in Cyprus. From a generation raised in a divided society, CFP develops future leaders to find solutions for living in harmony together in Cyprus.

For addition information about the program please visit: <http://cyprusfriendship.org>

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