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Contact: Stacie Fasola (617) 457-5418
Despina Gakopoulos (617) 457-5502
newsmedia@roadscholar.org

TRAGEDY LEADS CURRENT *MARIGOLD IDEAS FOR GOOD* GRAND-PRIZE WINNER TO EXPAND MASTERPEACE YOUTH ARTS PROGRAM

BOSTON (September 12, 2012) — Road Scholar and Participant Media are pleased to announce the latest \$5,000 grant recipient and \$5,000 Road Scholar program grand-prize winner for the *Marigold Ideas for Good* contest, the social action campaign for the film *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*. Karen Blessen, 60, was recognized for the incredible impact her non-profit organization 29 Pieces, and their MasterPEACE: Young Artists Making a Kinder World program has had on thousands of students in the Dallas community. MasterPEACE is a hands-on, art-based curriculum that teaches social values like kindness, compassion and other important life skills such as problem-solving and conflict resolution. It offers students in grades two through 12 as well as college students, the opportunity to engage creatively and to address the difficult issues they face in life from a perspective that goes beyond cognitive learning.

Ms. Blessen founded MasterPEACE following a tragic murder that occurred in front of her home in Texas in early 2000. As a former journalist, Karen chronicled her experience in an article called “One Bullet,” originally published in the Dallas Morning News. In the article, Karen reflects on the impact that a single bullet had on the lives of everyone involved in the violent encounter between two groups of young men and the victim who lay dying on her street, the families of the victim, the perpetrators and her neighborhood.

“The crime was a senseless one — a carjacking that went horribly wrong,” she said. “Getting to know the families, local law enforcement and going through the trial and learning how the justice system works was the catalyst for me to start MasterPEACE. I believe that the art-based lessons learned in MasterPEACE assist students of all ages learn to apply peaceful interactions with each other in lieu of violence.”

Ms. Blessen has dedicated her life to creating art. After earning a bachelor’s of fine arts from the University of Nebraska, she moved to New York and embarked on a successful 32-year career that included work as an illustrator and graphic artist. She was the first graphic artist to be named as a winner of the Pulitzer Prize. The Pulitzer was awarded in the category of Explanatory Journalism for work done with co-workers David Hanners and William Snyder on a special section published in the Dallas Morning News, “Anatomy of an Air Crash.”

She plans to invest the \$5,000 Encore.org grant to expand MasterPEACE to additional schools in Dallas. She also plans to enroll in her first Road Scholar program with her husband, and travel to Italy or Ireland.

“I grew up in a small town, but once I left, I developed a wanderlust that continues through today,” she said. “While my husband has traveled to Mexico and Canada, he hasn’t had the desire to travel further internationally

until now. For the first, time, he's interested in going with me! It'll be a new experience having someone do all of the planning, but I'm really looking forward to it."

Open to individuals 50 years and older, the *Marigold Ideas for Good* contest awards 30 \$5,000 grants from Encore.org to those who have innovative projects for improving their local communities. The six grand-prize winners receive the grant, as well as a Road Scholar educational travel adventure valued at \$5,000. To learn more about the contest, please visit www.roadscholar.org/marigold.

About Road Scholar

Not-for-profit Road Scholar's mission is to inspire adults to learn, discover and travel. Our learning adventures engage expert instructors, provide extraordinary access, and stimulate discourse and friendship among people for whom learning is the journey of a lifetime. Since inception, more than 5 million people have enrolled in our 6,500 iconic educational adventures offered annually in 50 states and 150 countries around the world.

Road Scholar educational adventures are created by Elderhostel, Inc., the not-for-profit world leader in lifelong learning since 1975. To learn more, please visit our website at www.roadscholar.org/press.

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