

Merriam Park NEIGHBORS FOR PEACE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Neighbors March for Peace Expected to Draw Large Crowd as Twin Cities Anti-War Momentum Continues to Grow in Response to First Iraq Bombings

St. Paul, MN – March 22, 2003 – Merriam Park Neighbors for Peace is a grassroots organization of neighbors from the Merriam Park area of St. Paul and surrounding Twin Cities neighborhoods who are dedicated to educating the public and encouraging the government to pursue peaceful, non-violent alternatives to war. Along with co-sponsor, the Iraq Peace Action Coalition, they will be holding the Neighbors March for Peace today at 1:30 p.m. in St. Paul. Marchers will assemble at 1:30 p.m. at Macalester College, 1600 Grand Avenue at Snelling Avenue, in the Bateman Plaza south of Grand Avenue outside of the Student Center. At 2:00 p.m., the group will proceed east on Summit Avenue and back west on Grand Avenue to return for a rally at Macalester College.

In spite of the first bombings in Iraq this week and in observation of the momentum of other recent anti-war demonstrations, Anne Benson, Merriam Park Neighbors for Peace co-founder, expects a large turn-out for today's Neighbors March for Peace in St. Paul. "The onset of the bombing has strengthened the resolve of the growing peace movement. Obviously our march won't stop the war, which has already begun, but it can show our leaders and the rest of the world that America is not united behind the Bush administration's war. As military action became more inevitable during the past weeks, we've been deluged with calls from people with no previous activist experience asking how they can get involved in trying to stop the killing. The grassroots organizations that have blossomed over the past weeks will continue to work for peace, for civil rights, and for political change in our state and our country."

Rachel Goligoski, the group's other co-founder, agrees that the anti-war momentum in the Twin Cities seems to be increasing. "Just because Bush has gone ahead with his military aggression, against the will of the UN and the will of the world, does not mean that people will change their moral conviction and support such an atrocity. I am committed to speaking out for peace before, during, and after war. Today's Neighbors March for Peace will show that people who support peace will continue to do so regardless of what Bush does. I expect the reality of the horrifying results of his actions will move even more people to stand up and speak out as the war progresses."

When asked if she feels that an anti-war demonstration like the Neighbors March for Peace may be misinterpreted as lack of support for the U.S. military personnel currently fighting in Iraq, Anne Benson responded, "We support our troops and certainly wish them no harm. They are good, brave people who are just doing their job. However, we do not support the mission they've been sent on. Our men and women are being sent unnecessarily into harm's way. We want and need the troops at home to protect us from real threats here."

Rachel Goligoski also fears for the lives of the U.S. troops, their families and loved ones, and Iraqi citizens and their loved ones, saying, "I am a patriot of the global community. I do not value American lives any more than I value the lives of any human beings from any country on earth. I mourn for the children of Iraq and their families who are subjected to the horrors of war, and I mourn for the children who will lose family members serving in the U.S. military."

Today's Neighbors March for Peace is endorsed by many organizations and elected officials, including the Anti-War Committee, Bedlam Theatre, Jay Benanav (St. Paul Council Member - Ward 4), Satveer Chaudhary (Minnesota Senator - District 50), Counter-Propaganda Coalition, Friends for a Non-Violent World, Friedenstreffen Neuss and the City of Neuss, Germany (St. Paul's Sister City), Alice Hausman (Minnesota Representative - District 66B), Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) - Local 17, Mac Iraq, Minnesota AlliantAction, North Country Co-op, Pax Christi Twin Cities, St. Anthony Park Neighbors for Peace, St. Joan of Arc/WAMM Peacekeepers, Students for Justice in Palestine,



Twin Cities Campaign to Lift Sanctions, United Steelworkers of America (USWA) - District 11, University of St. Thomas Students Against War, U of M Students Against War, Veterans for Peace, Welfare Rights Committee, Women Against Military Madness (WAMM), Women's Political Alliance, and Paul Zerby (Minneapolis Council Member - Ward 2).

Scheduled speakers include Ellen Anderson (Minnesota State Senator), Layla Asamarai (Iraqi-American), Vernon Bellecourt (American Indian Movement), Jay Benanav (St. Paul City Council Member), Mahmoud El Kati (Visiting Instructor of History, Macalester College), Keith Ellison (Minnesota State Representative), David Foster (District Director, United Steel Workers of America - District 11), Alice Hausman (Minnesota State Representative), Peter Rachleff (Professor of History, Macalester College), Phil Steger (Executive Director, Friends for a Non-Violent World), and Chante Wolf (Veterans for Peace).

Merriam Park Neighbors for Peace meets on Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. in the basement of St. Mark's Catholic Church, 2001 Dayton Avenue, St. Paul. Anyone who wants to work together with others for peace and related causes and bring an educational message of non-violence to his or her Twin Cities neighborhood is invited to attend meetings or subscribe to the MPPeace mailing list.

For more information about Merriam Park Neighbors for Peace or this event, please visit the group's web site at www.mppeace.org or contact:

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