

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Alaina Sadick

703.517.7652 | www.anahatagrace.org | anahata.outreach@gmail.com

Local Nonprofit Brings Yoga Teacher Training to Palestine

WASHINGTON, DC - June 18, 2012— For the past 10 months, Washington DC-based nonprofit Anahata Grace has been developing curriculum and raising funds for a highly-anticipated teacher training program in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Responding to a growing demand for expanded and increasingly sustainable yoga programs in the city, the project will come to fruition in July as part of an ongoing partnership with [Farashe Yoga](#), a nonprofit center in Ramallah.

The training, which will be the first of its kind in the West bank, will serve to build resources and establish new yoga-based wellness programs to schools, community centers, and refugee camps. Yoga is widely known for improving physical and mental wellness and relief of stress disorders, but when its principles are integrated into life off the mat, it can also be a catalyst for transformation and growth within a community. According to Maha Al-Sheik, co-founder of Farashe Yoga, these tools are especially important in the Palestinian context, where movement and access to economic and social resources is heavily restricted.

Since it opened in 2010, Farashe has been striving to meet the needs of the community—offering safe, accessible yoga throughout occupied territories with only a few volunteer teachers. Anahata will help to increase the cadre of teachers that are able to offer these healing services and enable Farashe to increase their program offerings and outreach efforts.

Emphasis will be on making self-care skills available to all community members, empowering women as local leaders, and on the therapeutic aspects of yoga and meditation. The training will provide foundational skills to teach yoga and meditation to children and adults, with specialized topics including prenatal yoga, yoga for school teachers, and meditation for mood management.

Anahata Grace was founded in 2007 by local teacher Angela Cerkevich to bring the benefits of yoga to vulnerable communities locally and abroad. The nonprofit's international work is directed by its mission to empower people to work through trauma, to establish a safe and peaceful atmosphere for conflict resolution,

and to build community and improve quality of life by removing barriers to holistic wellness tools that exist where those services are most needed. Beginning with a pilot project in Rwanda, they have focused on work in post-conflict areas, building sustainable programs through teacher trainings, program development, and the creation of supportive grants tools.

Cerkevich will be joined by fellow teacher and Anahata Program Director Shawn Parell to lead the 9-day foundational training in Ramallah, bringing twenty years of teaching experience to the project with specific expertise in yoga therapeutics.

"Yoga is a transformative healing practice. As we move, breathe, and open in awareness, we are reminded of the interdependency of all things and of our belonging in the world," says Parell. "We've been inspired by our own experience on the path of yoga, and believe it should be available to anyone who seeks it."

The DC community rallied behind the project, gathering and contributing funds for the 5th Annual DC Global Mala project which brought hundreds together to practice in Meridian Hill Park last September. Many local studios participated in the project, with some offering studio space for donation-based yoga

classes to raise additional support.

To learn more and support the work of Anahata Grace, please visit www.anahatagrace.org

About Anahata Grace

Anahata Grace is an international nonprofit organization, based in Washington DC, serving vulnerable communities locally and abroad through compassionate action to promote healing and social change.

Believing that everyone deserves a path to wellbeing, Anahata Grace serves at-risk populations in communities through a local campaign and international projects in trauma-affected countries. The focus of the local campaign is to provide yoga classes and other wellness services to domestic violence survivors, veterans, adults with HIV/AIDS, homeless adults, front-line workers, and at-risk youth. Internationally, Anahata provides yoga teacher trainings and learning immersions in partnership with community-based organizations in post-conflict areas.

About Farashe Yoga Center

Amidst a backdrop of a prolonged 60-year conflict, Farashe, a community yoga center in the heart of the Palestinian city of Ramallah, is providing a safe place for Palestinians to breathe, and relieve stress and anxiety from the harsh daily realities of living under military occupation. Farashe, which means "butterfly" in Arabic, aims to bring safe and accessible yoga to all throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, as a catalyst for transformation and growth within themselves, their families, and community.

Created and built purely through volunteers and donations, the Farashe Yoga Center is committed to the principles of "seva". As a not-for-profit organization, class fees are reinvested into the Center's maintenance, outreach yoga sessions in surrounding refugee camps, and to community development projects identified by the communities they work with. Though yoga is still new to most Palestinians, Farashe has been well-received by the Ramallah community with dozens of people coming to volunteer their time and resources to ensure its operation. Farashe officially opened in November 2010 and offers yoga classes five days a week, continuing to draw in first-time and veteran yoga students from all over the Palestinian territories.