For Immediate Release – June 2014

Regarding Mattie J.T. Stepanek 10-year Anniversary Events

Jimmy Carter called Mattie J.T. Stepanek “the most remarkable person” he has ever known. Oprah Winfrey named him one of her top three most memorable guests across her 25 years of programming. A congressional resolution was passed in his honor after he died, and a flag was flown over the US Capitol to honor his great contributions to society. Members of the Catholic church are gathering information on his heroic virtues for a possible Cause for Canonization. All this, and more, in honor of a child who died just before his 14th birthday, but who left a legacy that continues to grow and inspire people. A legacy of hope and peace, guided by a simple — but clear and achievable — message rooted in personal choices. This year, 2014, marks the 10-year anniversary of Mattie’s passing, and there are a number of events and campaigns being planned to celebrate the lasting impact of this amazing young man.

During his “almost 14 years” of living, Mattie penned seven NY Times Bestselling books of Heartsongs poetry and peace essays (five published during his life and two posthumously). Mattie was a frequent guest on shows like Oprah, Good Morning America, and Larry King Live. He served three terms as the National Goodwill Ambassador for the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and earned numerous awards for his writing and advocacy work, including an IPPY Gold Medal for Book of the Year, a Freddie Award for service, and the Humanitarian Award from the Department of Health and Human Services. Mattie died in June 2004 due to complications of a rare neuromuscular disease.

Although his life was brief, Mattie lived with depth, and the message of hope and peace he shared through his books and speeches continues to touch lives around the world. In the ten years since his death, he has become the namesake and inspiration for parks, schools, awards, scholarships, programs, a hospice care bill, and more around the world. The Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation was established to continue bringing his message to people of all ages in all parts of the world. And his final book, “Just Peace,” was transformed into a curriculum for global teens — since 2008, 177 “Global Teen Leaders” have created peace projects that have positively impacted millions of global citizens.

Mattie’s Foundation has planned peace events, campaigns, and activities to commemorate Mattie’s 10-year anniversary (June 22) and his 24th birthday (July 17). They include:

• Event --- Sunday, June 22, 3 pm — Memorial Mass, Franciscan Monastery in Washington, DC, commemorating Mattie’s 10-year anniversary.
• Event --- Saturday, July 19, 10:30 am to 12 noon — Peace Gathering in the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Park (“cake and conversation” to commemorate Mattie’s 24th birthday, and the unveiling of a Peace Pole being donated by Japanese peace activist Yuka Saionji Maatsura — whose grandfather launched the “May peace prevail on earth” campaign following WWII).
• Campaign — Mattie J.T. Stepanek Peace Day — Mattie’s Foundation is working to secure a proclamation by President Obama for July 17 (Mattie’s birthday) as an annual peace day for our nation in Mattie’s honor. Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) introduced this effort and Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD), and Former President Jimmy Carter have written letters of support. We hope to have the day secured during 2014 — Mattie’s tenth anniversary year. A Change.org Petition and a Campaign video have been launched for this effort, and we will be reaching out to additional politicians, celebrities, and citizens for support (link: http://www.chn.ge/?pQcZA1)
• Proclamation — on July 14, the City of Rockville, Maryland will proclaim Mattie J.T. Stepanek Peace Day for July 17 at a local level, to support our effort for the petition to make this a National day, proclaimed by the US President.
• Documentary — a short documentary of Mattie’s life and legacy and the peace day journey is being created to be released during 2014.

For more information about Mattie, Mattie’s Foundation, the peace day effort, Mattie’s message (and more) please visit www.MattieOnline.com.

Helpful direct links:
Highlights of Mattie’s legacy and honors across the past 10 years: http://www.mattieonline.com/?page_id=1199
Highlights of Mattie’s honors during his life: http://www.mattieonline.com/?page_id=1777
Save the Dates — Summer Events News page: http://www.mattieonline.com/?p=18197

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Jeni Stepanek, Ph.D., Executive Director: Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation
HeartsongBooks@gmail.com -- www.MattieOnline.com

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