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Teen Fiddlers from Mississippi and New England Awarded 2007 Daniel Pearl Memorial Violins

Country Bluegrass Winners Carry on the Journalist's Legacy of "Harmony for Humanity"

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 4 /PRNewswire/ -- The Daniel Pearl Foundation congratulates teenage fiddle sensations Mike Barnett and Ruby Jane Smith, winners of the 2007 Daniel Pearl Memorial Violins. Selected at the Mark O'Connor Strings Conference in San Diego, California they will have full use of these prestigious instruments for a year; including appearances at special concerts during the sixth annual Daniel Pearl World Music Days (www.danielpearlmusicdays.org) to be held October 1-15, 2007.

Eighteen-year-old Nashville native Mike Barnett has been described as "one of the hottest, fastest rising musicians in bluegrass music." Currently residing in Massachusetts Mike has performed at a variety of well known venues including The Kennedy Center for the Arts, the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Grand Ole Opry; in addition to many fiddle contests and bluegrass festivals across the country. His debut CD, *Lost Indian* is a collection of bluegrass favorites recorded with some of Nashville's greatest session musicians while a second CD, *Rhymes with Orange*, blends original acoustic melodies and funk adaptations of traditional fiddle tunes. Mike most recently joined the New England based "newgrass" phenomenon, *Northern Lights*.

"It's an incredible honor to be a part of Daniel Pearl's legacy," said Barnett. "Hopefully, the music will bring people together and touch people's lives. Winning this award has made me realize that music is really an international language; that no matter where you are in this world, music can bring people together."

Twelve-year-old Ruby Jane Smith is both the youngest winner of the Daniel Pearl Memorial violin and the youngest ever invited fiddler at the Grand Ole Opry. A fast-rising star in the landscape of country, bluegrass and Americana music, Ruby Jane exhibited an early connection to music. After only six fiddle lessons at age eight, she won first place in the first competition she entered - beginning a run of acclaim that has included appearances on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno and a feature piece on CBS News "Eye on America." She was the 2005 Mississippi State Fiddle Champion and was featured in a 2006 documentary about the legendary fiddler Jim Brock, with whom she has studied.

Commenting on receiving the strings violin award Smith exclaimed, "I am so very honored to be awarded the Daniel Pearl Memorial Violin! I hope we can all play for peace and harmony during Daniel Pearl World Music Days!"

The Daniel Pearl Memorial violins were crafted by Jonathan Cooper of Maine in honor of the international journalist and talented musician who played violin and fiddle wherever he traveled. Both present and past winners have become musical ambassadors for the Daniel Pearl Foundation - building international friendships through music and insuring that he is "Always Remembered," the name of a special composition dedicated to Pearl on the upcoming CD "A New Stage" by 2005 violin winner Samantha Robichaud of Canada.

"We are constantly amazed by the combination of talent and spirit that the Daniel Pearl violin winners exhibit," said Judea Pearl, Daniel's father and president of the Daniel Pearl Foundation. "Their continuing enthusiasm for the World Music Days mission of spreading 'Harmony for Humanity' unites and empowers audiences year after year."

Daniel Pearl's murder by terrorists in Pakistan in 2002 touched millions who never knew him. By developing innovative international programs focused on journalism, music and respectful dialogue, the Daniel Pearl Foundation seeks to counter the hatred and intolerance that took his

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