



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 27, 2011

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RICHMOND BALLET INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH GAINS GOVERNOR'S ATTENTION

RICHMOND – Richmond Ballet Teaching Artists Katherine Smothers and Jordan Livermon will return to Emek Hefer, Israel to conduct another two-week *Minds In Motion* residency. This will be Richmond Ballet's third trip to the same community in Emek Hefer (the sister city of the Richmond Jewish community), and will coincide with Governor McDonnell's and the First Lady's trade trip to Israel this November.

Smothers and Livermon will spend October 30 – November 11, 2011 leading the fourth- and fifth- grade students of the Beit-Yitzhak School in *Minds In Motion* classes and teach dances to the students for performances at the end of the residency. Richmond Ballet's acclaimed outreach program, *Minds In Motion*, teaches fourth-grade students discipline, dedication, and self-awareness by leading them through a series of choreographic movements that are then expanded upon to create a dance performance.

"The exchange has been so successful, and such a valuable experience for both sides," explains Smothers of the partnership. "We love sharing such a unique cultural experience with dance as our common language." The team continues to explore opportunities to grow this partnership, and has found ways to connect *Minds In Motion* students here in Virginia with the students in Israel. The student dancers send photos and decorate cards and posters to share with their faraway counterparts.

An extra-special addition this year will be the presence of Virginia's Governor and First Lady, Bob and Maureen McDonnell, who will be in Israel the same week. "We are so excited to welcome them to the performance in Israel, and to really help them show some of Virginia's best to the community in Emek Hefer," says Smothers.

Another component is the addition of a second school, Kalansuwa, an Arab-Israeli school. Those students will participate in the *Minds in Motion* residency and dance alongside the students from Beit-Yitzhak in the final performances.

The partnership with Emek Hefer has proven to be an incredibly valuable one, where each culture is embraced by the other. Richmond Ballet is pleased to share the special experience that is the *Minds In Motion* program with a city so closely connected to Richmond.

Brett Bonda, former *Minds In Motion* Director and now Managing Director at Richmond Ballet, will also travel to Israel for the second week of the residency and join Smothers and Livermon for the final performance.

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Richmond Ballet, The State Ballet of Virginia, is dedicated to the education, promotion, preservation and continuing evolution of the art form of ballet. Richmond Ballet strives to keep meaningful works of dance alive and to produce and foster new works that remain true to these values. Now in its 28th professional season, Richmond Ballet's mission is to "awaken and uplift the human spirit, both for audiences and artists."