



## For Immediate Release

### INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

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### **Women's Festivals Co-founder, Mary Schnack, Conducts Communications Training in Kenya**

SEDONA, AZ. (December 8, 2008) – International communications expert and small business owner, Mary Schnack conducted communications training in Nairobi, Kenya, for Vital Voices and the Nike Foundation from December 1-5. Ten girls and young women from ages 12-23 were trained on leadership and how to communicate their stories and the impact of HIV and AIDS on their communities.

All of the girls came from slums in Nairobi or rural areas surrounding the city. Each girl is a leader in her community through involvement with education, empowerment, entrepreneurial training or community youth programs.

“Every day, 6,000 young people ages 15-24 become infected with HIV. Two-thirds of these new cases are girls,” said Schnack, president of Sedona based public relations firm, Mary Schnack Media Services, Inc., and founder of Up from the Dust, an import business dedicated to the global growth of women microenterprises. “The Nike Foundation works with government partners like the United Nations Foundation to break this cycle and empower girls to be the solution of the HIV crises.

The final day the girls spoke at the corporate launch of the HIV Free Generation, an initiative in Kenya funded by the U.S. Government's PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) program and corporate partners, such as the Nike Foundation, Coca-Cola, Warner Brothers, Accenture and others. In attendance was the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Michael E. Ranneberger, and NGO and corporate executives.

While in Kenya, Schnack also participated in an advocacy training program for women business owners and served as a mentor at the Women Mentor Walk where more than 300 women and girls walked at the Nairobi Safari Walk and discussed career and business issues. At the walk, Schnack presented Dr. Auma Obama, Sport for Social Change Initiative Coordinator for CARE International in East Africa and half-sister of President-Elect Barack Obama, with medical supplies to donate to a program or clinic she works with.

Schnack conducts communications seminars globally to multi-national companies, women business owners, community leaders, Chambers of Commerce and conferences.

“My experience coaching girls basketball in Sedona really helped me prepare for this training, besides my communication background,” said Schnack. “These girls do not sit around and feel sorry for themselves, despite their difficult living conditions, but are intent on bettering not only their lives, but the lives of their families and communities. The way their confidence, self-esteem and communication improved during the week was amazing.”

For more information on Schnack visit [www.communicationbridges.com](http://www.communicationbridges.com) or call 928-204-9834.

Vital Voices was started in 1997 by then-First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright after the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing to promote the advancement of women as a US Foreign policy goal. It is the preeminent non-governmental organization (NGO) that identifies, trains and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe, enabling them to create a better world and providing these women with the capacity, connections and credibility they need to unlock their leadership potential. In June 2000 Vital Voices Global Partnership was created as a nonprofit. Besides Senator Clinton (D-NY), the other two

honorary co-chairs are Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, (R-TX) and Nancy Kassebaum Baker, former US Senator (R-KS). For more information, go to [www.VitalVoices.org](http://www.VitalVoices.org).

*About the Women's Festivals*

In 1997, the United Nations declared March 8 the day to celebrate women around the world. The Women's Festivals were created to celebrate the accomplishments and nurture the dreams of women in an interactive, multi-cultural, and entertaining format focusing on the five key areas of women's lives: **Personal**, **Professional**, **Philanthropic**, **Political** and **Planet** (also known as the "5 Ps"). The Festivals aim to provide a unique opportunity to provide a rich common experience and fertile environment for networking and resource sharing. Founding not-for-profit organizations include: The National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, SCORE, Future Women CEOs, and Women's Economic Ventures (WEV).

Data compiled by the Department of Commerce indicates that women account for some \$7 trillion in consumer and business spending in the U.S. and control more than \$13 trillion in personal wealth. This amount is projected to rise to \$20 trillion over the next 15 years. Quite simply, the economic power wielded by women has never been greater.

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