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GLOBAL MALA PROJECT

LOCAL YOGA STUDIOS UNITE FOR A WORLDWIDE CAUSE

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YOGA'S ROOTS LIE FIRMLY IN THE QUEST FOR peace, both inside and out. Yet this ideal is sometimes forgotten when we focus on the physical aspects of the practice. Next month, the Global Mala Project will provide a timely reminder of yoga's spiritual nature through a series of events aiming to unite the worldwide community.

With ties to the United Nations International Peace Day on September 21, Global Mala brings together yoga teachers, students and organizations to raise funds to help people and the planet. The name and the inspiration for the event is taken from the *mala*—a garland of 108 prayer beads used in meditation. The number 108 has deep spiritual significance throughout Eastern traditions, and will be used in a unique way by yoga groups in each country. Some will complete 108 minutes of meditation, chant 108 rounds of a mantra, or move through 108 sun salutations (a yoga sequence). As students dedicate their practice to a greater good, Shiva Rea, a famous yoga teacher and Global Mala event organizer, hopes the event will create "a mala around the world."

The money raised from each event will mainly benefit four nonprofit organizations: Trees for the Future, War Child, YouthAIDS and RED. The US-based Trees for the Future fights global warming by working with local communities to plant trees and revitalize damaged land. War Child helps children caught in war-torn areas, supporting them during the conflict and helping them to reintegrate into society. YouthAIDS and RED work to educate people about AIDS and help those who suffer from the disease.

From London to Los Angeles, Hong Kong to Tokyo, the list of those who are creating their own yoga mala event is steadily growing. In Tokyo, the days of the Global Mala happen to coincide with Yoga Fest, an annual gathering that takes place September 22-24. Local studios Be Yoga, Sun & Moon, and Yogajaya have collaborated for the week, providing Tokyoites with a number of ways to get involved.

Patrick Oancia of Yogajaya and Kumiko Mack of Be Yoga will be leading a special class for the Global Mala at Yoga Fest on September 23 at 9am. As space is limited, Yoga Fest has also reserved the park next to the venue for the three days, where instructors will lead sun salutations with the help of new teachers. The sets of salutations have been broken down into two-hour segments that will be begin at 1pm and 3pm on September 22; 10am, 1pm, and 3pm on the 23rd; and 10am and 1pm on the 24th.

The spirit of the Global Mala will be incorporated into Sun & Moon classes with students "joining energies through such actions as a 108 mantra *om* chant, a 108-second peace meditation, or ten sets of 18 sun salutations," says Director Leza Lowitz, who notes that the group will also be making a "Give Peas a Chance Mala" with 108- *edamame*. During this time the studio will be accepting charitable donations on behalf of the project.

Not only will this event provide the opportunity for "peace in action," it will also serve as a reminder about yoga's spiritual roots. "Yoga is, and always was, more about our actions in the world than what we do on our yoga mats," Lowitz says, "which is something that has tended to get lost in modern times." **For more information about the Global Mala Project, see www.globalmala.org. Information about Yoga Fest can be found at www.yogafest.jp. Also keep an eye on local studio websites for more information: Be Yoga (www.beyogajapan.com), Sun & Moon (www.sunandmoon.jp) and Yogajaya (www.yogajaya.com).**