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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

YOGA FOR TEENAGE GIRLS RETURNS TO MERCY FIRST FOSTER CARE FACILITY

The stars aligned at the One Love Long Island summer Yoga Festival, when Ellen Plotkin wandered through the vendor booths and met Jenny Jared. “I got goose bumps,” said Jenny Jared, Creative Director of United We Om, a yoga and meditation non-profit that provides practice to underserved communities. “The moment I met Ellen, I knew that we were going to be able to share the countless benefits of yoga with so many more foster children in need,” Jenny continued. Ellen Plotkin is the Vice Principal of p256Q@Mercyfirst, which serves children ages 14–18 who have been placed in their care by the court system. The girls come from a variety of backgrounds and Mercy First provides a nurturing, therapeutic community to encourage independence, support and care. Ellen was looking to bring yoga to the teen and pre-teen girls as an extension of their physical education classes and within a few weeks, Ellen was dimming the lights of the gym, preparing the excited teens for their first yoga class.

“It was so amazing to see the girls feel comfortable enough to try anything and to lay still with their eyes closed,” said Ellen. The girls embraced the yoga immediately under the inspiring guidance of their yoga teacher, Karen Cohen-Gibbons. “Karen was amazing,” continued Ellen, “the girls loved her and felt so comfortable; I enjoyed it too. It was wonderful.” Karen is a Long Island yoga teacher with specialized training from YogaKids as well as a Master’s degree in Transpersonal Psychology. “We always try to find teachers with the life experience or training to be able to relate to their students’ situation,” said Jenny, “and Karen had the skills, training and heart to connect with these young women, which is why the program was so successful and needed to happen again.”

“Our first Karma Project at Mercy First was such a success that we made it a priority to expand our outreach in their community,” says Matt Jared, Jenny’s husband, Executive Director and co-founder of United We Om, “and this time we’re taking yoga out of the gym and incorporating it into their educational curriculum.” As part of their Roads to Success program, Mercy First is incorporating the yoga into the classroom this time because as Ellen, Jenny and Matt agree, “Yoga is a tool that students can use anywhere, anytime.”

Beginning March 14th and continuing for two months, United We Om and Karen Cohen-Gibbons will return to Mercy First to teach two groups of pre-teen and teenage girls focusing on stress reduction, positive visualization and breathing, by incorporating specific yoga postures and mindfulness techniques designed to help build the girls self-confidence and strengthen them both physically and emotionally.

United We Om is currently providing yoga and mediation to women living in low-income housing at Westhab, to homeless teenage mothers at Momma’s House and Latina teens who attempted suicide at Life is Precious. United We Om hosts on-going by-donation yoga classes for the Long Island community and has partnered with Veterans Yoga Project to expand their Yoga for Veterans program in 2016. To learn more about United We Om and the charitable work they’re doing in New York please visit their website at www.UnitedWeOm.org. ###

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