

# Cirque du O.C.

In partnership with the Scarlet Sisters Circus, Girls Inc.,  
and the WAVE Trauma Centre

August 2006 | Belfast, Northern Ireland & Orange County, California



Taught by professional circus performers, artists and tutors committed to creating community through circus performances and outreach workshops.

The circus youth camp, *Cirque de O.C.*, brought children affected by the violence in Northern Ireland to stay with host families in Orange County. Together, these children participated in a week-long series of circus arts workshops and activities to build self-esteem, problem-solving and team-building skills, creative thinking, and cross-community communication -- becoming *Circus Citizen Peacebuilders*. The camp culminated in a final performance for staff, family, friends, and the wider community.

The ultimate goal of the program was for children to work with those who would otherwise be seen as an "other" or an enemy and to realize that they are actually more similar than different. The youth begin to see conflict as unjustifiable and also infuse their families and peers with an understanding of their sameness -- over time leading to an entire generation who will choose peace and reconciliation over violence.

"That was the best thing that I have ever done in my life. I don't think I will ever do anything like that again -- but, [I like being in America] 'cause it is far better than living in [Northern Ireland] 'cause they don't even fight with their neighbors even though they are different.'"

**AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH  
EXCHANGE PROGRAM  
UTILIZING CIRCUS ARTS  
TRAINING TO BUILD SELF-  
ESTEEM, PROBLEM-SOLVING  
& TEAM-BUILDING SKILLS  
AND RECONCILIATION**

