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Contact: Sophie Sartain
Katahdin Productions
323.337.1177
ssartain@katahdinproductions.com

HANNAH SENESH DOCUMENTARY SET FOR MOTHER'S DAY PREMIERE AT TORONTO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

NARRATED BY OSCAR NOMINEE JOAN ALLEN, "BLESSED IS THE MATCH" IS AN INSPIRATIONAL TALE OF COURAGE AND A MOVING MOTHER-DAUGHTER STORY

Los Angeles, CA (April 21, 2008) – Katahdin Productions today announced that its film *Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh* will premiere at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival on Mother's Day, May 11, 2008, at 6:00 pm (Bloor Cinema). Executive produced by Emmy Award winner Marta Kauffman (co-creator of the hit series *Friends*) and narrated by three-time Academy Award nominee Joan Allen, the film is the first-ever documentary feature on the World War II-era poet and diarist who became a paratrooper, resistance fighter and modern-day Joan of Arc.

Safe in Palestine in 1944, Hannah volunteered for a mission to rescue Jews in her native Hungary. Shockingly, it was the only military rescue mission for Jews during the Holocaust. Hannah parachuted behind enemy lines, was captured, tortured and ultimately executed by the Nazis. Incredibly, her mother Catherine witnessed the entire ordeal – first as a prisoner with Hannah and later as her advocate, braving the bombed-out streets of Budapest in a desperate attempt to save her daughter.

"We are excited and honored to premiere the film at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival, especially on Mother's Day," says director Roberta Grossman. "*Blessed Is the Match* not only celebrates Hannah's courage, but also explores the deep connection between Hannah and her mother Catherine. This remarkable mother-daughter bond adds a layer to a story that has inspired readers of Hannah's diary for generations."

The filmmakers were given unprecedented access to the Senesh family archive – including hundreds of unpublished letters and over 1,300 never-before-seen photos. They interviewed the few remaining survivors who knew Hannah – her classmates at a Budapest girls' school, her fellow pioneers in Palestine (including Israeli President Shimon Peres, who knew Hannah in the 1940s), parachutists from Hannah's mission and prisoners from Hannah's time in a Gestapo jail in the summer of 1944. They also assembled a team of top scholars, including

Holocaust expert Michael Berenbaum (creator of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum) and World War II historian Sir Martin Gilbert.

Grossman and her producing partner Lisa Thomas raised a significant portion of the film's funds through an innovative mother-daughter campaign. Donors could make contributions in honor of their mothers or daughters.

"For Mother's Day in 2006, we approached potential donors with an offer," says Thomas. "We would send their mother a card noting that a donation had been made in her name and explaining that her name would appear in the film's credits. The response was amazing. We found that the mother-daughter aspect of the story really resonated with people."

Principal photography took place from 2006-2007 in Israel, the U.S., Hungary and the Czech Republic. Executive producer Kauffman (who also co-created the TV series *Dream On*, *Veronica's Closet* and *The Powers That Be*) helped shape the story at the editing stage. "Marta's input was key," says Grossman. "She is someone who elevates every project she touches, and her experience and guidance took the film to a new level." Joan Allen came on board to voice the part of Catherine Senesh in Spring 2008.

After its premiere in Toronto, *Blessed Is the Match* will screen at the Jerusalem International Film Festival. Grossman will participate in a seminar on teaching the Holocaust through film at Yad Vashem. The filmmakers are also launching an extensive outreach campaign for this film with educational partner Facing History and Ourselves and through partnerships with other Jewish organizations. A companion museum exhibit, curated by the New York Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, will launch in 2009.

For tickets to the screening, please call 416-967-1528 or visit www.tjff.com.

For more on Hannah Senesh and *Blessed Is the Match*, please visit www.blessedisthematch.com.

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Katahdin Productions is a nonprofit documentary production company based in Berkeley, California, with production offices in Los Angeles. Katahdin's mission is to tell compelling stories often ignored by the mainstream media – stories that inform, enlighten, entertain and inspire. Katahdin is dedicated to creating high quality documentary films, ancillary educational materials and media projects that open minds, provoke dialogue and encourage positive social change – outstanding works that touch the soul as they sound a call to action.