



**AGA KHAN FOUNDATION U.S.A.**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**THOUSANDS EXPECTED AT HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP WALK  
TO HELP END GLOBAL POVERTY**

**Houston, Texas, October 31, 2008** – Over 10,000 are expected to participate in the Houston Partnership Walk, an event held annually in five major cities across the U.S. to raise awareness and funds to alleviate global poverty and promote partnerships between America and the developing world. The Walk is an initiative of Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. (AKF USA) and its network of volunteers in communities across the United States, to involve young and old in a compassionate effort as global citizens to build bridges of hope that reach across boundaries of race, religion, age and gender.

Partnership Walk, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year in the U.S., is a *PartnershipsInAction* initiative giving individuals the opportunity to actively take part in advancing human dignity and peace around the globe through volunteerism, awareness-raising and contributions. *PartnershipsInAction* represent AKF USA's growing portfolio of programs including Partnership Golf and Tennis Tournaments, Softball Classic, corporate and professional networking events, film screenings, essay and art competitions, education activities, among others. Since 1995, *PartnershipsInAction* events have attracted over 250,000 participants and raised over \$29 million nationwide.

Partnership Walk brings together families, friends, students and leaders in government, business, media and the arts for a day of learning activities, fundraising and culturally diverse performances. **100% of funds raised at Partnership Walk go directly to the projects supported by the Foundation;** not a cent is spent on administrative costs. AKF USA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code. The Foundation invests in people to help impoverished communities and families seize the opportunity to move toward greater choice and voice in order to improve their lives. By promoting quality education for girls in Afghanistan, improving health care for mothers and infants in India, and placing tools for economic empowerment into the hands of farmers in East Africa, the Foundation helps them build the skills necessary to lead self-sufficient, healthy and dignified lives.

Partnership Walk will be held on **Saturday, November 8 at Sam Houston Park - Downtown**. Over 10,000 participants are expected to walk 3 kilometers in downtown Houston to demonstrate their support for ending global poverty. Nationwide, over 30,000 are expected to participate in Partnership Walk, also held in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas and Los Angeles. Scores of teams from corporations, universities, schools and community organizations will participate in the Houston Partnership Walk to take a step to end global poverty.

At the opening ceremony, Mr. David Wallace, who serves on the Board of Directors and as Vice President of the Texas Economic Development Corporation, and is Chief Executive Officer for Wallace Bajjali Development Partners, LP, will give the keynote address. Along with other dignitaries Mr. Wallace will tour the the *Village in Action*, interactive exhibits on site that showcase the Foundation's innovative solutions for reducing poverty in Africa and Asia. Distinguished guests include Sheila Jackson Lee, Congresswoman; M.J. Khan, Houston Councilmember; Thomas Abraham, Sugar Land Councilmember; and Cierra Ramirez, actress, "The Suite Life of Zack and Cody".

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The entertainment program celebrating the diversity of world cultures will be hosted by media celebrities Laura Lanning, producer/reporter for “Wild About Houston”; and Sharon Melton, news anchor, NBC 12. For a detailed schedule and directions, visit the Partnership Walk website at [www.PartnershipsInAction.org/walk](http://www.PartnershipsInAction.org/walk).

One of the Walk’s most inspiring features is the *Village in Action*, where participants of all ages have an opportunity to engage in interactive activities and learn how people in developing countries create innovative solutions to overcome the challenges of low income, poor health conditions and limited educational opportunities. Through displays, exhibits and hands-on demonstrations, the *Village in Action* showcases the positive results that are achieved through the Aga Khan Foundation’s development programs. Participants can take part in exercises and exhibits as if they are traveling to Afghanistan, East Africa, India, Pakistan and Central Asia. Volunteers have researched, designed and created the exhibits. Through this process, youth, in particular, gain a deeper understanding of global citizenship and social responsibility.

The 2008 theme for Partnership Walk, “*Planting Our Future*,” spotlights the extraordinary success, expansion and impact of rural support programs pioneered by the Aga Khan Foundation, initiated in northern Pakistan in 1982 and expanded to nine other countries. The story of the AKF’s rural support programs brings to light the power of partnerships and reflects the Foundation’s enduring commitment to community participation and grassroots democracy. It embraces the time-tested principle of helping people to help themselves. For over a quarter century, Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. has focused on planting hope in the lives of people in the developing world in the areas of health, education, rural development, civil society and the environment. Today, 2.5 million people have benefited directly from the Foundation’s rural support programs worldwide, in over 8,400 village organizations in Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Syria and Tajikistan.

Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A., established in 1981, is a private, nondenominational, nonprofit international development organization committed to the struggle against hunger, disease and illiteracy. The Foundation works to address the root causes of poverty by sharing innovative solutions and by supporting over 100 self-help programs in health, education, rural development, civil society and the environment in 18 countries in East Africa and South and Central Asia. Using community-based approaches to meet basic human needs, the Foundation builds the capacity of community and non-governmental organizations to have a lasting impact on reducing poverty.

AKF USA works in partnership with other like-minded institutions dedicated to international development such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, as well as private foundations and corporations, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Citigroup Foundation, Microsoft Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, among others.

The Foundation is part of the Aga Khan Development Network ([www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org)), a network of private, non-denominational, development agencies around the world, established by His Highness the Aga Khan to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, improve living conditions and opportunities. The overarching goal of the Network’s programs is to help poor communities achieve a level of self-reliance whereby they are able to plan their own futures. His Highness the Aga Khan is the Founder and Chairman of the Board of Aga Khan Foundation and 49<sup>th</sup> hereditary Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims. The Network’s agencies work for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion and its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable of society.

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