



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION U.S.A.

PRESS RELEASE

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**2,500 WALK TO HELP END GLOBAL POVERTY
AT CHICAGO PARTNERSHIP WALK**

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, October 11, 2009 – Over 2,500 participated in the Chicago Partnership Walk today, an event held annually in major cities across the U.S. The Walk is an initiative of Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. (AKF USA) to raise awareness and funds to alleviate global poverty and promote partnership between America and the developing world. This year marks the 15th year for Partnership Walk and nationwide over 30,000 are expected to participate in the Walk in nine cities, including Atlanta, Birmingham, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Memphis, Orlando and San Francisco. Visit www.PartnershipsInAction.org/walk.

Held at Montrose Harbor in Chicago, Partnership Walk brought together families, friends, students and leaders in government, business, media and the arts for a day of learning activities, fundraising and culturally diverse performances. Teams from corporations, universities, schools and community organizations demonstrated their solidarity to take a step at ending global poverty.

The Chicago Partnership Walk raised \$250,000. **100% of funds raised at Partnership Walk go directly to the projects supported by the Foundation.** The cost of organizing the Walk is completely underwritten by AKF USA and in-kind contributors. No contributions are used for administrative costs. Since 1995, PartnershipsInAction events have attracted over 280,000 participants, raising \$32 million.

Addressing the theme of education, Illinois State Representative Elaine Nekritz spoke to the enthusiastic crowd at the opening ceremony saying, “I applaud the Aga Khan Foundation for taking a broad view of education. It is much more than traditional primary and secondary education; much more than obtaining a university or advanced degree. For the Foundation, it includes basic literacy, training new teachers and designing curriculum to promote cross-cultural understanding. It also includes early childhood education. I am proud that the State of Illinois joins with the Foundation in stressing the importance of early childhood.”

The opening program featured lively entertainment celebrating the diversity of world cultures and was hosted by media celebrities Dr. Sandy Goldberg, health reporter at NBC News 5; Bill Moller of TC Public Relations and former host of “Your Money with Bill Moller”; Rehan Aslam, Fox News Chicago producer; and Mai Martinez, anchor/reporter, CBS 2. Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White attended the Chicago Partnership Walk as he has every year since its launch in Chicago in 2003. Following remarks by the Secretary of State, the Jesse White Tumbling Team electrified the audience with their talent, energy and brilliant showmanship.

The 2009 theme for the Walk, “*Education – The Universal Bridge*” highlighted the impact of Aga Khan Foundation’s educational activities. Serving as a bridge to help individuals and communities build more productive, fulfilling and dignified lives, the Foundation’s educational activities span across a broad range of initiatives to help people in Asia and Africa reach their full potential, covering early childhood development, primary and secondary school improvement, and skills and management training for professionals, entrepreneurs and community members.

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An agency of the Aga Khan Development Network

Aga Khan Foundation's education programs bring to light the power of partnerships and reflect the Foundation's enduring commitment to education. Many of the Aga Khan Foundation's programs in East Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan have been supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development and others. For over a quarter century, Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A. has worked in the developing world in the areas of health, education, rural development, civil society and the environment. These efforts equip people with life-long skills to overcome poverty and embrace the time-tested principle of helping people to help themselves.

Dr. Eboo Patel, Executive Director of the Interfaith Youth Core, a member of President Obama's Advisory Council of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnership, and a member on the AKF USA National Committee, noted in the keynote address at the opening ceremony: "The people in front of me today are the bridge builders. We follow in the vision of this man [His Highness the Aga Khan] who has dreamed of a world of bridges—bridges of hope, bridges of cooperation, bridges between people. We are building the arch so that other people can get to the other side. ... The other side is the future. The other side is a world in which five-year-olds everywhere from Afghanistan to Alaska are excited about school, a world in which nurses and doctors every where can save the lives of people who come to their hospitals, a world in which business people everywhere, whether they're in Kabul, Karachi or Kansas, have the tools in front of them to begin their own businesses, to create a life for themselves and their families that they can be proud of, that they feel is dignified."

One of the most inspiring features of Partnership Walk was the *Village in Action*, where participants enjoyed interactive displays and hands-on exhibits that spotlighted how the Foundation is implementing creative solutions in poor regions from Afghanistan to Zanzibar with projects that promote quality education and health care, expand microcredit opportunities and improve incomes and agricultural productivity. Volunteers guided participants through interactive exhibits to introduce the innovative ways that Aga Khan Foundation is alleviating hunger, disease and illiteracy.

The day was filled with celebration to acknowledge the hope and connection that people in the U.S. can provide as global citizens to others around the world. A wide variety of uplifting performances in dance and music from world cultures were performed by local talent including Malaysian drummers, Xiling Group, Hip Hop Connection, Bold Face Band, Spanish Flames, Mad Rhythms and others performing dances from India and Thailand. Many of the youth were inspired by reaching out beyond borders to make a difference in ending poverty.

AKF USA, established in 1981, is a private, non-denominational, non-profit international development organization committed to alleviating poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy. AKF USA is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (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. The Foundation presently supports over 100 programs in 18 countries for the common good of all citizens regardless of their gender, origin or religion. The geographic focus of the Foundation's development programs is in East Africa and South and Central Asia.

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