



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

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**\$317,000 RAISED AT THE FIRST MEMPHIS PARTNERSHIP WALK  
TO HELP END GLOBAL POVERTY**

**MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, September 27, 2009** – Over 1,000 participated in the Memphis Partnership Walk to demonstrate their support for ending global poverty at an event held annually in major cities across the U.S. This was the first Partnership Walk held in the Memphis area and marked the 15<sup>th</sup> year for Walk, which was inaugurated in Los Angeles in 1995. 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. Nationwide, over 30,000 are expected to participate in the Walk in nine cities, including Atlanta, Birmingham, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Orlando and San Francisco. Teams from corporations, universities, schools and community organizations walked in solidarity at the Memphis Partnership Walk to take a step to help girls in Afghanistan get a better education, to ensure that mothers in India and Pakistan receive quality health care and to improve agricultural productivity of farmers from Mali to Mozambique. Visit the Partnership Walk website at [www.PartnershipsInAction.org/walk](http://www.PartnershipsInAction.org/walk).

The 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. The Memphis Partnership Walk raised \$317,000. **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.

The Memphis Partnership Walk was held today at Cox Park in Collierville, TN. In an address to the enthusiastic crowd, A.C. Wharton, Jr., mayor of Shelby County said “I am a firm believer that deep down inside each of us is a better person that is waiting to be born, regardless of where they live, their skin color, or where they worship. Deep down inside all of us when we give *birth* to that greater and better person waiting to be born – putting aside all differences – we become the strongest army that has ever set foot on the face of the earth – not by weapons, not by bombs, not by missiles, but simply by the weapons of good will of love, compassion, and understanding. That is the mightiest army of all and you are well on your way to spreading that message. And it starts right here in Collierville.” Stan Joyner, mayor of Collierville, also addressed the gathering. The event featured lively entertainment celebrating the diversity of world cultures, educational exhibits for the entire family and a silent auction. Serving as masters of ceremonies were Joe Birch, Evening News Anchor for NBC Action News 5, Brian Elder, talk show host for KIX 106FM, and Justin Mitchell, former News Reporter for WRBO radio and former Alderman and Vice Mayor of Collierville.

The 2009 theme for the Walk, “*Education – The Universal Bridge*” highlights 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. 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.

One of the most inspiring features of Partnership Walk was the *Village in Action*, where participants took part in the interactive hands-on exhibits to spotlight how the Foundation is implementing creative long-term solutions from Afghanistan to Zanzibar to end global poverty. Activities in the *Village in Action* showed the impact of the Foundation's 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. For example, at the Milk & Hope obstacle course, visitors were introduced to the Foundation's education program in Afghanistan and Tajikistan that is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Azhar Park exhibit told the story of an ambitious park project in Egypt to create a "green lung" for Cairo. In the Marketplace, visitors learned how microcredit loans have helped marginalized people from Asia and Africa lift themselves out of 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](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. 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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