



9/11 UNITY WALK

**Press Release – 9/11 Unity Walk Hosts Benefit Celebrating Compassionate Leaders
For Immediate Release
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9/11 Unity Walk (www.911unitywalk.org) held its first major fundraising event on Thursday, Sept. 8, 2011 at Meridian International Center, Washington, DC, at which it honored three local and international “compassionate leaders.” More than 100 people enjoyed delicious food, live entertainment, and inspiring words from the awardees.

Ms. Karen Armstrong, internationally renowned author and TEDPrize recipient, received the Lifetime Achievement Award “**For leadership in activating the Golden Rule in the hearts of people of all faiths around the world, and, through a lifetime of writing and activism, helping to bring religions back to their compassionate roots.**”

Ms. Armstrong used her TED award to start the Charter for Compassion (charterforcompassion.org), which is a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking but, more importantly, compassionate action to the center of religious, moral and political life. Compassion is the principled determination to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, and lies at the heart of all religious and ethical systems. A statement by Ms. Armstrong, who could not attend the event from London, was read by presenter Mr. Alex Kronemer, Founder of Unity Productions Foundation.

Mr. Rizwan Jaka received the Pioneer Award for “**For pioneering and compassionate support of 9/11 Unity Walk and interfaith dialogue in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.**” In addition to his support for Unity Walk since its inception in 2004, Mr. Jaka is also Board Member & Interfaith/Government/Media Co-Chair, and Past President, of All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) and Treasurer & Board Member, and former Chair, Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC). He also works nationally, as Board Member of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). His award was presented by his colleague Rev. Carol Flett of Washington National Cathedral.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Award went to Washington, DC-based ML Resources, LLC. The award was presented by Major Steve Morris of Salvation Army, who highlighted the humanitarian work ML Resources has funded by Salvation Army in the US for the homeless and in Pakistan for minority Christian populations. Mr. Mesh Lakhani accepted the award on behalf of the company, which recognized ML Resources “**For compassionate leadership in building partnerships and philanthropy to increase dialogue among different faiths, ethnic groups, and social classes.**”

The work of all honorees is in line with Unity Walk’s mission of bringing together people of all ages, backgrounds and faiths to learn to respect each other. Unity Walk seeks to create a world where people are united, rather than divided, by their many faiths. To achieve these goals, Unity Walk supports compassionate leadership, intentional service, and experiential education for adults and youth of all backgrounds and faiths.

Unity Walk thanks the many volunteers and sponsors who made the evening possible, especially Mrs. Meg Poole and Ms. Patricia Langan, Co-Chairs of the Benefit, Ms. Shama Farooq, Board member, donors Mr. Omar Ashraf and the Wiedemer Family, and the Benefit Host Committee.

Generous sponsors included Islamic Relief, ISNA, Awards Limousine Service, Inc., Dar Al-Hijrah, RSVP Catering, BrathW8 Studios, Community of Christ, UPF, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, and Whole Foods Georgetown.