



MEDIA ALERT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Montessori Education for Houston's Low-income Children

Ibn Sina Foundation Launches a \$3.5 Million Capital Effort

HOUSTON, Texas., September 4, 2007 – The Ibn Sina Foundation will host a **Foundation Stone Ceremony** on **Thursday, September 6, 2007** to mark the launch of a capital effort to build the **Ibn Sina Montessori School** -- a new primary school dedicated to providing children from low-income families with an affordable, private, Montessori education. The school will accommodate up to 300 children annually from ages 18 month to 5 years.

The event will be held at 11246 S. Wilcrest Drive, Houston, Texas 77099. A reception will be held at 9:00 a.m. followed by the ceremony at 10:00 a.m. The Mistress of Ceremonies is **Ms. Shern-Min Chow**, news anchor for KHOU-TV. Special guests of honor include the **Honorable M.J. Khan**, City of Houston Council, District F and **Betsy Coe, Ph.D.**, named 2008 Living Legacy from the American Montessori Society.

After reviewing and researching a myriad of teaching methods, the Ibn Sina Foundation Board of Directors agreed upon the Montessori Method for the new school. In the U.S. a Montessori education is equated with wealth and high academic ability. Most of these private schools have expensive tuition – out of reach for low-income families. Through this new **early childhood development program** within the Montessori School, local children will have the opportunity to experience this exclusive education for a small fee (based on a sliding scale). Ibn Sina leadership believes that the benefit of this early development will introduce the area's underprivileged children to a life-time of academic interest and achievement while also providing a "level playing

field” by the time they reach public school. Ibn Sina’s goal is to offer a long-term model to other nonprofit agencies and the city of Houston demonstrating that early childhood development via a Montessori education can be a reality for underserved children too.

Currently forty-three percent of the children in Ibn Sina’s service area (Southwest Houston) live 200 percent below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau); more than 30 percent of children less than four years of age are not enrolled in pre-school. Ibn Sina leadership has identified its Pilot Community of 200-300 children within its immediate service area.

The vision of the Ibn Sina Montessori School is to develop long-term programs for local families to provide their children an opportunity to excel in education and ultimately rise to leadership roles later in life.

The objectives of the program are to provide high quality, accessible, affordable early care and education options by supporting and strengthening families to promote healthy growth and the development of children; to assist underprivileged children and the local indigent population; to provide a Montessori education to a minority population in a culturally sensitive environment; and to promote intellectual development and character building.

The **Ibn Sina Community Medical Center** and the **Ibn Sina Child Development Center, both in Southwest Houston** are the part of a three phase project to provide for the underserved families of the community. These two projects coupled with a final component of **economic development** are designed specifically for the low-income families within the area who have virtually no access to such services due to a multitude of barriers including economic, language and transportation. Collectively, these three programs - health, education and economic development – offer a holistic development to local families.

The Ibn Sina Foundation was established in 2001 by a group of local physicians, business, and healthcare professionals to bridge the growing gap between the health care needs of a rapidly expanding population of underserved families, and the ability of existing public institutions to meet their needs. The Foundation’s mission is to ensure the health of the community by providing integrated preventive and primary care in a clinic setting through the dissemination and application of health related knowledge, thereby enhancing the quality of life for future generations.

Since its inception, Ibn Sina Community Medical Clinics have provided free and/or reduced medical and dental care for 51,000 patients, including over 1,000 hurricane-affected families.

March 2007 marked the opening of the new \$1.8 million Ibn Sina Community Medical Center in Southwest Houston dedicated to providing primary care, dentistry and specialty medicine for Houston's uninsured families. Presently, this center treats between 50 and 60 patients per day – one of the busiest in the city. This new medical center was made possible through the support of Houston's philanthropic community, the city of Houston and the Ibn Sina Foundation Board of Directors. Today, there are two Ibn Sina Community Medical Clinics: Clear Lake/SE Houston and SW Houston.

For more information, please contact Dr. Aijaz Ali Khawaja, CEO, Ibn Sina Foundation and Community Medical Clinics at 713-777-7462 or visit the website at www.ibnsinafoundation.org

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