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NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER INDUCTED INTO ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY

Chicago, Illinois - April 20, 2009 - Environmentalist, political activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai of Kenya was inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority as an Honorary Member during a special members-only induction recently held at the Sorority's Corporate Headquarters in Chicago. In place of International President, Barbara A. McKinzie, who was unable to attend, former International President, Mattelia B. Grays of Houston, TX and the International Chairman of the Honorary Members/Awards Committee, Mae R. Carr, presided over the induction.

An Honorary membership is the highest honor the Sorority presents, and those who are inducted represent the highest standards of character, courage and womanhood.

Dr. Maathai was the first African woman to receive the coveted Nobel Peace Prize and has dedicated her life struggling for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. Through her activism, advocacy, vigilance and commitment, she embodies the Alpha Kappa Alpha ideal, which is captured in its credo: "Providing service to all mankind." This is Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's core mission, the foundation upon which the Sorority was founded in 1908 and the purpose she pledged to uphold during the induction.

Dr. Maathai's journey to greatness began in 1977 when she founded the Green Belt Movement, a grassroots environmental non-governmental organization, which has now planted over 30 million trees across Kenya to prevent soil erosion. She has come to be affectionately called "Tree Woman" or "The Tree Mother of Africa." Since its founding, she has been increasingly active on both environmental and women's issues.

Her pursuit has been dotted with struggles and triumphs. During the regime of President Daniel Arap Moi, she was imprisoned several times and violently attacked for demanding multi-party elections and an end to political corruption and tribal politics. In 1989, Maathai almost single-handedly saved Nairobi's Uhuru Park by stopping the construction by Moi's business associates of the 60-story Kenya Times Media Trust business complex.

In 2002, Dr. Maathai was elected to Parliament when the National Rainbow Coalition, which she represented, defeated the ruling party Kenya African National Union. She has been Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife since 2003. She founded the Mazingira Green Party of Kenya in 2003. In 2006, she was one of the eight flag bearers at the 2006 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremony. Also, on May 21, 2006, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by, and gave the commencement address at, Connecticut College. In January 2007, Dr. Maathai hosted the Global Young Greens conference in Nairobi, attended by more than 120 young delegates of environmental, civil rights, peace and social justice youth movements, as well as youth organizations of green parties from all over the world.

Being presented the Nobel Peace Prize, which she received in 2004, represents the climactic high point of a life spent bettering the lives of others.

Another milestone is being inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Following the formal induction, she said she was “humbled, honored and privileged to be a member.” She expressed humility and said that the only time she felt so uplifted and transformed was when she was baptized. She said she would cherish membership in Alpha Kappa Alpha “for the rest of my life.”

Following her speech, members participating in the induction presented her with a host of gifts—including the AKA Barbie. They welcomed her as the newest member of the Sorority and expressed love toward her.

“We are honored and proud to have Dr. Maathai join our great sisterhood,” said McKinzie. “Her lifelong pursuit of justice, including environmental equity, underscores her will to fight for fairness and commitment to service. The determination she's exhibited, along with her courage, are qualities that embody the Alpha Kappa Alpha woman. She will make a great addition to our Sorority, and we look forward to supporting and embracing her.”

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is America's first Greek-letter organization founded in 1908 by, and for, African-American college women. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, it is one of the world's leading service organizations. The Sorority's members have made a commitment “to serve all mankind” through a nucleus of more than 225,000 women in over 975 chapters in the United States, the Caribbean, Canada, Germany, Korea, Japan and in the continent of Africa. Barbara A. McKinzie is the 27th International President. McKinzie's administration is marked by the theme: ESP, which stands for Economics, Service and Partnerships. For more information, log on to www.aka1908.com.

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Nobel Peace Prize Winner Inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

PHOTO Caption:

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's International Chairman, Honorary Members/Awards Committee, Mae R. Carr (left) and former International President, Mattelia B. Grays (right) present Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai with a gift basket following her induction into the Sorority as an Honorary Member.