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THIRD ANNUAL AVON WALK FOR BREAST CANCER HOUSTON RAISES \$2 MILLION

Avon Walk Houston Kicks Off Eighth Year of the Event Series with more than 1,000 Participants and Grants Awarded to Six Local Breast Cancer Organizations

Houston, April 11, 2010 – The eighth annual Avon Walk for Breast Cancer season kicked off with the third annual Avon Walk in Houston this weekend, which raised \$2 million to advance access to care and finding a cure for breast cancer. The Avon Walk Houston was a huge success, with more than 1,000 participants drawn from 33 states and Washington, D.C., including 97 breast cancer survivors, who joined together to raise lifesaving funds and awareness for breast cancer.

During the Closing Ceremony at Stude Park, walker and five-year breast cancer survivor Janelle Loucks, from Magnolia, TX, was one of several speakers who provided an immediate reminder of the impact of breast cancer and the importance of taking personal action to make a difference.

"Living for five years with advanced breast cancer has been challenging," said Loucks. "I never gave up hope that my doctors could help me heal even after being confined to a wheelchair with tumors in my lungs, liver, bones and breast. After I regained my strength, I was eager to 'give back' and registered for my first Avon Walk last year. I was nervous about the distance, and even more concerned about raising \$1,800. But my family and friends came through and we raised more than \$2,800 – inspiration I needed to walk the entire 39.3 miles. I learned that anyone can put one foot in front of the other to raise money and can walk with all of these beautiful survivors to show that there is always hope."

Marc Hurlbert, director of the Avon Foundation for Women Breast Cancer Crusade, announced during the Closing Ceremony a total of more than \$1.4 million in grants to six local organizations, ensuring the funds raised immediately benefit the community. More grants are slated to be awarded throughout the year to breast cancer programs nationwide. "Our beneficiaries are changing the course of breast cancer - here in Texas, across the country, and around the world. Let's thank everyone for their hard work!" said Hurlbert. "We have supported breast cancer organizations in Texas for many years, but the outpouring of support and generosity through the Avon Walk these past three years has allowed us to make substantial and much-needed new grants that will benefit those facing breast cancer in Texas and nationwide.

The new Houston-area grants include:

- **The Sisters Network**, the leading African-American breast cancer survivorship organization in the United States, received a **\$50,000** Avon Foundation grant. The national program provides free mammograms and financial assistance for medical-related lodging, co-pay, office visits, prescriptions, and transportation. The grant supports travel scholarships for 100 breast cancer advocates to attend the 11th Annual National African-American Breast Cancer Conference being held in Houston this weekend. Sisters Network Founder/CEO **Karen Jackson** and Board Member **Bettie Eubanks** accepted the award.
- **The Breast Health Collaborative of Texas**, a group of like-minded advocates for breast health, received a **\$125,000** Avon Foundation grant to pilot a city-wide project designed to change breast cancer screening behaviors and expand access to breast care to reduce mortality rates among minority women. The new project will coordinate screening and care throughout Houston among 48 non-profit healthcare providers. The project also will work to increase adherence to screening appointments and enlist for-profit mammography sites to provide free screening. **Dorothy Gibbons** of **The Rose** and **Gail Bray** of **St. Luke's Episcopal** accepted the award.

- **University of Texas Science Park** in Bastrop received a **\$127,645** grant from the Avon Foundation to continue its prevention study for a third year analyzing markers in blood and breast tissue that are associated with risk factors for breast cancer. The study will also develop a test strip similar to a pregnancy test strip for detecting early breast cancer. If the studies are successful, apparently healthy women would be alerted that they have increase risk for breast cancer or breast cancer recurrence, and women undergoing treatment for breast cancer will know if their treatment is working. **Dr. Gary Johanning**, associate professor of Comparative Medicine, accepted the award.
- **University of Texas Health Science Center** received a **\$150,000** Avon Foundation to conduct a study to validate markers found in saliva with the aim of developing a new test as an adjunct to mammography in order to improve the accuracy of screening. Dean **John Valenza** and **Dr. Charles Streckfus** accepted the award.
- **Baylor College of Medicine** received a **\$350,000** Avon Foundation grant that will fund a comprehensive breast care program for underserved women seen through the Breast Oncology Clinic at Ben Taub Hospital. The Clinic is the largest dedicated breast clinic for underserved in Harris County and serves a primarily Hispanic, African-American, and Asian patient populations. **Dr. Mothaffar Rimawi**, assistant professor of medicine, accepted the grant.
- The **University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center**, among the leading cancer clinical and research organizations in the world, received two new grants totaling **\$605,000**. The first grant will fund the upgrade of film-based equipment to a digital unit in their mobile mammography van, which provides screening and diagnosis to Houston's underserved and uninsured population. The second grant supports a research study that aims to better understand the earliest changes in breast cells that give rise to cancer that will help predict who is at an increased risk of developing breast cancer. **Dr. Isabelle Bedrosian** and mobile van administrative manager **Melissa Lofton** accepted the grants.

During the Avon Walk Houston, which is a noncompetitive event, women and men had a choice of walking a marathon (26.2 miles) or a marathon and a half (39.3 miles) over the weekend. The event kicked off Saturday, April 10, with an early morning Opening Ceremony at Stude Park. Following the Ceremony, walkers began their journey, traveling through the greater Houston area and concluding at the Avon Walk "Wellness Village" at Rice University, a "tent city" complete with two-person tents, hot showers, prepared meals, entertainment, and recreational activities such as the Spa Zone, yoga, and Tomboy Tools' "Tool School 101" demonstrations. On Sunday, April 11, walkers completed another 13.1 miles together, ending back at Stude Park where they were greeted by thousands of family and friends who shared in a celebratory and moving Closing Ceremony, including the awarding of new grants.

To participate in the Avon Walk Houston, each walker raised a minimum of \$1,800 in donations. The Avon Foundation for Women [a 501(c)(3) public charity] raises and manages funds, which are awarded to local, regional and national breast cancer organizations to support five areas of the breast cancer cause, including awareness and education, screening and diagnosis, access to treatment, support services, and scientific research, all with a focus on the medically underserved.

Donations are still being accepted for the Avon Walk Houston, and registration is still open for women and men to take part in the remaining Avon Walks of 2010: Washington, DC (May 1-2); Boston, MA (May 15-16); Chicago, IL (June 5-6); Rocky Mountains, CO (June 26-27); San Francisco, CA (July 10-11); Santa Barbara, CA* (September 11-12); New York, NY (October 16-17); and Charlotte, NC (October 23-24).

To register, donate or for additional information, please visit **www.avonwalk.org** or call **800-541-WALK**.

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The Avon Walk for Breast Cancer thanks National Sponsor: Reebok; and Official Sponsors: Genentech BioOncology and Tomboy Tools.

Remember: early detection can help save lives. Schedule your mammogram or clinical breast exam today. For more breast cancer information and resources, visit www.cancer.org (keyword breast cancer) or www.avonfoundation.org, where you can access free printable breast cancer informational literature.