



*a nonprofit, educational and humanitarian organization*

PRESS RELEASE

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**Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and the Art of Living Foundation  
Celebrate 25 Years of Service to Humanity: Members of Congress, the United Nations,  
Veterans and America's Youth join together to Create a "Violence-Free, Stress-Free Society"**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — At a time when the global community finds itself in a web of terror, violence, fear and anxiety, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar offers a ray of hope. One of the most respected spiritual leaders and multifaceted social activists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Sri Sri's (*pr: Shree Shree*) mission of uniting the planet as a "violence-free, stress-free" global family has inspired millions of people throughout the world.

On March 28, 2007, at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington D.C., Sri Sri and the Art of Living Foundation USA will celebrate 25 years of service to humanity. Scheduled speakers include Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader of the House and Joseph R. Biden Jr., United States Senator-Delaware. The event will also serve as a platform to launch Sri Sri's initiatives to create a "violence-free, stress-free" America. It will highlight the importance of fostering human values such as compassion, friendliness, a sense of brotherhood and an attitude of service to society in order to achieve this goal.

In keeping with this vision, Mr. Vijay K. Nambiar, Chief of Staff for the United Nations Secretary-General, will unveil a *Universal Declaration of Human Values*, developed by Sri Sri. It represents a fresh new vision for bringing about greater understanding among different peoples, and fostering harmonious coexistence among different cultures and civilizations.

Today, the Art of Living Foundation (AOLF), created by Sri Sri in 1981, is one of the world's largest volunteer organizations. Sri Sri also founded the International Association for Human Values (IAHV) in 1997. Both organizations work in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. In only 25 years, 25 million people have benefited from the Art of Living Course, in more than 140 countries.

Among the programs offered through AOLF and IAHV worldwide, is a special trauma relief course to address the emotional recovery of people impacted by conflict, war and natural disaster. Using ancient breathing techniques, the course empowers individuals with tools to alleviate the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) and helps to rekindle basic human values such as compassion, enthusiasm for life and a sense of belonging.

Floyd "Shad" Meshad, founder and president of the National Veterans Foundation (NVF), will honor Sri Sri on behalf of NVF at the event, for his trauma relief programs for veterans and their families in the United States. For more than 30 years Meshad has worked as a therapist for veterans and as an advocate for veterans' rights. He was among the first to study the disorder now known as PTSD. Meshad and key staff at NVF recently participated in Sri Sri's special trauma relief course. "The course surprised me in that it showed the impact that focused breathing techniques can have in the healing of emotions," he said. "All indications are that it could be extremely

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helpful in the healing of traumatic emotional experiences which are common among returning veterans. Everyone who can breathe should take this course.”

M. Ali Bankat took the course in Iraq. “Before this experience, I was sad, depressed and I was starting to lose hope because of the situation here in Iraq,” he said. “Now after only four days I feel confident in myself – happier and have hopes and dreams again and I feel life is so beautiful.” Bankat is not alone. Already, more than 50,000 people in Southeast Asia who suffered the consequences of the 2004 tsunami have benefited from Art of Living programs. Thousands more are benefiting from these programs in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Israel, Lebanon, India, Pakistan, Kashmir, Russia and post-Katrina New Orleans.

Sri Sri is also playing a key role in negotiating peace between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. He is responsible for the formation of a Committee for Peace, comprising Hindu and Buddhist leaders, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

AOLF and IAHV are also placing a special emphasis on initiatives in Washington, D.C. and New Orleans, where violence and crime among young people continue to rise at alarming rates. “We need to deglamourize aggressive behavior. Children feel that they will be noticed, only if they behave aggressively,” Sri Sri said. “We need to change this mindset and establish non-violence and the values of Mahatma Gandhi in the classrooms”.

Paullette Jones, principal of Ideal Academy, a public charter school in Washington, DC, said, “The Art of Living Foundation has contributed to a dramatic shift in the atmosphere at Ideal Academy. Last year there was tremendous violence. Students were being robbed - even at gunpoint”, she said. “The atmosphere on campus now is much calmer. The gang that used to rile students now comes to band practice instead. There is greater cooperation among teachers who have participated in the course.”

In 2006, *The Week*, one of South Asia’s more popular magazines, cited Sri Sri as one of the sub-continent’s 10 most influential leaders. In February of the same year, more than 2.5 million people representing 110 countries, 1,000 spiritual leaders from the 10 major world religions and 750 key political figures gathered in Bangalore, India, to honor the man, his vision and his unprecedented success. It was the largest gathering for peace in history.

With abundant energy and an ever-present smile, Sri Sri travels to 40 countries every year spreading his message of universal love and a peaceful coexistence.

**While worldwide media have extensively covered Sri Sri, his story is ripe for in-depth coverage in the United States.** To arrange an interview with Sri Sri or learn more about the Art of Living Foundation contact Patti Montella at (512)576-7264 or email [patti@artofliving.org](mailto:patti@artofliving.org)

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