**For Immediate Release**

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**GOVERNOR DEVAL PATRICK AND BOSTON CELEBRATE NELSON MANDELA DAY JULY 18**

**Citizens Encouraged to Donate 67 minutes of Volunteer Time in Tribute**

Boston, MA, July 3, 2013 – On July 18, Nelson Mandela’s 95th birthday, a coalition of community organizations, elected officials, and activists will host a celebration of Mandela’s life at the Old South Church, 645 Boylston Street, Copley Square, Boston, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The celebration joins special guest speakers Governor Deval Patrick and a US South African Embassy representative along with a reading of Mandela’s inspirational words by local youth and musical tributes. The event is free and open to the public.

Designated in 2009 by the United Nations, Nelson Mandela Day is an international day of service dedicated to continuing the South African leader’s legacy of working to improve the lives of others. Annually, on July 18, citizens are encouraged to join others around the world in donating 67 minutes to a favorite charity or local community – one-minute for each year of Nelson Mandela’s activism starting as a political leader and human rights attorney, then a prisoner of conscience, and later an international peacemaker and the first democratically elected president of a free South Africa.

Mary Tiseo, Executive Director of South Africa Partners, a local nonprofit promoting partnership development between the United States and South Africa said, “This is a moment to celebrate one of the greatest leaders of a generation, certainly in my lifetime. I feel enormously privileged to have lived in this era. Nelson Mandela’s example will continue to inspire me and others for generations to come.”

Massachusetts has historically been a strong supporter of democracy in South Africa. The July 18 event in Boston draws upon a rich history of local support for a free South Africa dating back to the 1960’s. Mr. Mandela visited Boston on his eight-city tour of the United States, just four months after his release from prison. While in Boston, Mr. Mandela attended a rally at Madison Park High School, a luncheon at the JFK Library hosted by the Kennedy family, a rally and concert on the Esplanade, drawing more than 300,000 people, and a fundraising dinner at the Fairmont Copley Hotel.

Jack Connors, who organized local business leaders to support the visit remembers, “It was an unprecedented outpouring of support. Initially we had no idea how many people would respond, but as we got closer to the visit, we began to understand just how significant and moving the day would be.”

While in Massachusetts, on June 23, 1990, Nelson Mandela praised the Commonwealth for being the first state to pass legislation that instituted sanctions against companies doing business in South Africa calling it “the conscience of American society.” He went on to say, “When one day our history is rewritten, the pioneering role of Massachusetts will stand out like a shining diamond.”

Representative Byron Rushing, who oversaw the implementation of the legislation, remembers it as a tremendous victory, “The anti-apartheid movement in the state was just so strong that eventually it was clear to everyone in the State House it was the will of the people to pass this legislation--over a gubernatorial veto. I am proud to have been able to serve during a time when Massachusetts was willing to take a stand for human rights and lead the way that has followed throughout this nation.”

The organizers of the July 18 event are working to institute Nelson Mandela Day as an annual celebration in Boston and across Massachusetts.

For more information, contact South Africa Partners at (617) 443-1072. To find a list of suggested volunteer opportunities in Boston and surrounding areas, visit: [www.sapartners.org/volunteer](http://www.sapartners.org/volunteer).

**About South Africa Partners**

South Africa Partners (SA Partners) builds mutually beneficial partnerships between the United States and South Africa in the areas of health and education. Serving as a catalyst of innovative approaches, SA Partners links people, strengthens communities, promotes social justice and fosters leadership in both countries. Specifically, SA Partners seeks to:

* Catalyze strategic partnership opportunities that build the capacity of South African organizations;
* Incubate long-term collaborations between the United States and South Africa;
* Identify model programs and “best practices” that can be replicated in both countries; and
* Facilitate people-to-people initiatives that strengthen relationships between the two countries.

[www.sapartners.org](http://www.sapartners.org)

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