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**For Immediate Release**

## Youth Represent RRHA in Houston at Karate Tournament

(Richmond, Va., July 16, 2009)—Discipline, self-control, respect, patience and team work are some of the traits Richmonders Bria and Alysia Harrison displayed this month at a karate tournament in Houston.

Bria and Alysia (pronounced Ah-lee-sha) began learning karate a year ago through Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority's Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy, which pairs young residents of housing authority properties with instruction in nontraditional sports.

The Harrison sisters traveled to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Karate Summer Camp in Houston July 8 through 12, not only to demonstrate their karate skills, but to learn new ones. For both girls, who have lived with their family in RRHA's Mosby Court for seven years, it was their first plane ride and first time in Texas.

"We're so proud of our youth traveling the country and positively representing RRHA on a national stage," said Anthony Scott, RRHA's chief executive officer. "Their accomplishments reflect a movement among our residents, strategic partners and staff members who are not only striving for excellence, but are committed to being the change they want to see in their communities. Each of us is charged with being a catalyst for building strong neighborhoods, what better way than having youth who excel."

Alysia, an 8-year-old going into the fourth grade at George Mason Elementary School, said she enjoys using what she's learned in karate, which includes much more than the physical lessons.

"I enjoy doing karate," Alysia said. "It shows discipline. It teaches you when to fight and when not to fight. I learned how not to get an attitude with people so fast."

"It helps me show respect to other people," Alysia said about her karate lessons.

Bria, a 13-year-old rising freshman at Thomas Jefferson High School, said she and her sister practice at home for an hour daily and go to the karate dojo two days each week.

"We've taught our friends some things we learned," Bria said.

And although she hasn't had to use her self-defense skills, Bria takes pleasure in knowing how to defend herself if the situation arose.

The girls' mother, Toni McWilliams, accompanied them to Houston and participated in the camp's self defense and exercise classes. "It was pretty exciting," McWilliams said of the camp. "I'm very proud of their accomplishments."

The Harrison sisters' instructor Clarence Fowlkes, who runs the downtown dojo Henrico Dai Ichi Shotokan, said the duo sharpened their skills at the Houston camp. "They performed very well," Fowlkes said. "Their technique became more clear and crisp."

Fowlkes, who has been teaching karate since 1994 usually has anywhere from eight to 19 students from RRHA's Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy. "Both girls have a beautiful work ethic."

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