

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE  
SEPTEMBER 12, 2007**

**Contacts: Jon Newman  
(804) 788-1414**

**Russ Martz  
(412) 497-5775**

**Author and Founder of Children's Writing Laboratories Honored  
with \$250,000 Heinz Award for Arts and Humanities**

**Youngest-ever recipient Dave Eggers recognized  
for literary and philanthropic achievements**

**PITTSBURGH, September 12, 2007** – A critically acclaimed novelist whose meteoric commercial success has helped propel him into the worlds of philanthropy, advocacy and education has been selected to receive the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Heinz Award in the Arts and Humanities, among the largest individual achievement prizes in the world.

Dave Eggers of San Francisco, the author of best-selling works in both fiction and nonfiction as well as the founder of inner-city writing laboratories for youth and a publishing house for writers, is among six distinguished Americans selected to receive one of the \$250,000 awards, presented in five categories by the Heinz Family Foundation. At age 37, he is the youngest-ever recipient of the Heinz Award.

“Dave Eggers is not only an accomplished and versatile man of letters but the protagonist of a real-life story of generosity and inspiration,” said Teresa Heinz, chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “As a young man, he has infused his love of writing and learning into the broader community, nurturing the talents and aspirations of a new generation of writers and creating new outlets for a range of literary expression. Whether as a writer, mentor or benefactor, he has provided voice to the value of human potential.”

Having burst on the literary scene with his autobiographical bestseller, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, before he was 30, Mr. Eggers has since enjoyed critical acclaim in both fiction and nonfiction, in particular, with his 2006 novel, *What is the What*, which was a finalist for the 2006 National Book Critics Award for Fiction. The novel, a blend of biography, fiction and journalism, recounts the tragic story of Valentino Achak Deng, one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, whom Mr. Eggers came to know and whose heroic odyssey the author tells with authenticity and pathos. The *New York Times Book Review* called the novel “eloquent testimony to the power of storytelling...an extraordinary work of witness, and of art.” All author fees and publisher profits from the best-selling novel are committed to the Valentino Achak Deng Foundation, which has already begun building schools and community centers in war-torn southern Sudan.

But it is his infectious love of writing – together with an inspiring commitment to nurturing young literary voices – that provided Mr. Eggers the impetus to found 826 Valencia, a writing laboratory for children that has expanded from his home in San Francisco to five other U.S. cities: New York, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Seattle and Los Angeles. A seventh center is due to open in Boston this fall. At a time when other young writers would be searching out the next bestseller, Mr. Eggers used monies from his book earnings in 2002 to open the first center, providing free tutoring, English as a Second Language classes, writing workshops, summer camps, publication projects and other services to kids ages six to 18.

In order to help emerging writers, Mr. Eggers also launched McSweeney’s, a publishing house that produces his and other writers’ works, as well as *McSweeney’s*, a literary quarterly; *The Believer*, a monthly magazine on literary and political matters; and the Voice of Witness oral history series about social injustice. Having co-authored a book in 2005 about the relationship between teacher compensation and student achievement, Mr. Eggers also has become an outspoken advocate for raising teacher pay. His talents are not confined to the written page – Mr. Eggers has co-written the screenplay to the movie version of the children’s book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak. The movie, directed by Spike Jonze, is expected to be released later this year. For the compelling impact of his work, *Time* magazine named Mr. Eggers one of its “100 Most Influential People of the Year” in 2005.

“I used to write in isolation, at a remove from the world – a remove I thought was necessary to a writer’s life,” Mr. Eggers said. “But in the last five years or so, I’ve really come to realize how connected I need to be, and more importantly, how huge the impact of a book can be. A book can affect real change, in terms of understanding an issue or group of people, and even in concrete terms. At McSweeney’s and 826 Valencia, we’ve been lucky to have published books that raised tens of thousands of dollars for our literacy programs, books that have given voice to victims of human rights abuses, and now the response to *What Is the What* will actually make new schools possible in southern Sudan. And that’s on our small scale. Other writers and publishers are out there working on much larger scales, and their impact is incredible. Books still have a very central and powerful place in the world, and we’re happy to be a small part of it all. I’m humbled by this great honor from the Heinz Family Foundation, whose work I regard with respect and admiration.”

Since 1993, the Heinz Family Foundation of Pittsburgh has recognized individuals whose dedication, skill and generosity of spirit represent the best of the human qualities that the late Sen. Heinz, for whom the award is named, held so dear.

Presented in five categories, the other Heinz Award recipients are:

- **Environment (co-winners): Bernard Amadei**, Ph.D., Boulder, Colo., engineer, professor and founder of Engineers without Borders – USA; and **Susan Seacrest**, Lincoln, Neb., environmental advocate and founder of the Groundwater Foundation
- **Human Condition: David L. Heymann**, M.D., Geneva, Switzerland, physician, World Health Organization administrator and international public health advocate
- **Public Policy: Donald M. Berwick**, M.D., Cambridge, Mass., physician, professor and health care reformer
- **Technology, the Economy and Employment: Hugh Herr**, Ph.D., Cambridge, Mass., inventor, professor and pioneer in biomechantronics

\* \* \*

### **About the Heinz Foundation**

The Heinz Family Foundation, one of the Heinz Family Philanthropies, began as a charitable trust established by the late Sen. Heinz in 1984. His widow, Teresa Heinz, created the Heinz Awards in 1993 as the primary activity of the foundation. In addition to the Heinz Awards, the foundation directs a grant-making program that is active in a wide range of issues, principally those concerning women's health and environment, health care cost and coverage, as well as pensions and retirement security.

Nominations for the Heinz Awards are submitted by an invited Council of Nominators, all experts in their fields, who serve anonymously. Award recipients are selected by the board of directors for the Heinz Awards upon recommendation by a blue-ribbon panel of jurors in each category.

Past recipients of the Heinz Awards include marine biologist Jane Lubchenco, inventor and founder of the student robotics competition FIRST Dean Kamen, environmental advocate Peggy Shepard, medical anthropologist Paul Farmer, artist and community activist Rick Lowe and Paul Anastas, a leader in the "green chemistry" movement.

In addition to the \$250,000 award for their unrestricted use, recipients are presented with a medallion inscribed with the image of Sen. Heinz on one side and a rendering of a globe passing between two hands on the other. The medallion symbolizes the partnership, continuity and values carried on to the next generation. The hands also suggest passing on the stewardship of the earth to future generations.

The Heinz Awards will be presented at a private ceremony on October 22 in Pittsburgh.

Additional information is available online at [www.heinzawards.net](http://www.heinzawards.net).

# # #