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**Mother-Turned-Clean-Groundwater Advocate to Share  
\$250,000 Heinz Award for the Environment**

**Susan Seacrest recognized for spurring widespread education  
and action on groundwater safety**

**PITTSBURGH, September 12, 2007** – A Nebraska homemaker who turned her concern over the quality of local groundwater into a national campaign to educate policymakers, farmers, businesses and students about drinking water pollution has been selected as a co-recipient of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Heinz Award for the Environment, among the largest individual achievement prizes in the world.

Susan Seacrest, 53, the founder of the Groundwater Foundation whose education and advocacy efforts have flowed well beyond her Great Plains home to all quarters of the nation, is among six distinguished Americans selected to share the \$1.25 million in awards, presented in five categories by the Heinz Family Foundation.

“Susan Seacrest embodies the very best of America's can-do spirit,” said Teresa Heinz, chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Self-educated on an issue that affects all of us, the safety and reliability of our groundwater, she has shared her knowledge and concerns with anyone and everyone who will listen. Engaging, creative, collaborative and, perhaps most of all, persistent, she has been a tireless and remarkably effective advocate for protecting the health of our fragile aquifers.”

Ms. Seacrest shares the award with Dr. Bernard Amadei, founder of Engineers Without Borders.

A mother whose concern over the quality of drinking water propelled her to become a self-educated authority on groundwater, Ms. Seacrest's unintended diversion into the realm of environmentalism began in 1985 when she learned that Nebraska's elevated leukemia and non-Hodgkins lymphoma rates might be linked to pesticides and nitrates in groundwater near her Nebraska home. Because her infant son was seriously ill at the time, she was concerned that it was environmental degradation that was putting him and others at risk. As a result, she contacted a researcher at the University of Nebraska who challenged her to learn all she could about groundwater. What she discovered moved her to found the Groundwater Foundation, an organization that for more than a generation has been a driving force in improving the health of the nation's groundwater. Through nonpolitical advocacy that emphasizes education and leverages the power of personal relationships, the Groundwater Foundation has helped bring about a wave of reform, not only through the enactment of new laws but by eliciting voluntary changes in behavior by those involved in groundwater contamination.

The Groundwater Foundation worked with farmers and natural resources organizations to educate a large cross section of the public about the need to reduce nitrate levels in Nebraska's High Plains Aquifer to safe levels. Enlisting farmers as part of the solution, nitrate levels in the central Platte basin fell and the foundation effort quickly grew beyond the state's borders. The Groundwater Foundation's Groundwater Guardian program, which encourages citizen involvement in groundwater protection at the local level, has spread to 165 communities in 35 states and Canada. Another initiative called G<sup>3</sup> – Growing Groundwater Guardians – is designed to ensure that the Groundwater Guardian program is sustained, growing, innovative and effective.

The Groundwater Foundation has a particular focus on educating children about groundwater issues. In 1988, the first annual Children's Groundwater Festival was held, which continues to attract thousands of elementary school students each spring. The

water festival program is now being replicated in all 50 states and 15 foreign countries. For 15 years, the organization hosted Groundwater University, a four-day summer camp for youth that taught about groundwater and related issues through activities, presentations, experiments and field trips. Last year, Ms. Seacrest created a new program called “Hydro Heroes: A Youth Leadership Adventure,” that instructs students on how to make a difference in protecting water and other natural resources.

Ms. Seacrest’s expertise in groundwater education earned her an Environmental Protection Agency appointment to the Children’s Health Protection Advisory Council, two terms on the National Drinking Water Advisory Council and keynote speaking appearances at conferences around the world, including the United Nations.

“Our quality of life begins with the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, but the health of these basic components of life is susceptible to the modern world around us,” Ms. Seacrest said. “Ensuring that the water in our nation’s aquifers is clean requires a steadfast commitment by all of us – a commitment that starts with educating ourselves and new generations about how to protect our precious groundwater. It is my hope that this wonderful recognition by the Heinz Family Foundation will help us broaden awareness about it and enhance the urgency by which we address this vital issue.”

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:

- **Arts and Humanities: Dave Eggers**, San Francisco, author and founder of the 826 Valencia writing laboratories as well as a publishing house for emerging writers
- **Environment (co-recipient): Bernard Amadei**, Ph.D., Boulder, Colo., engineer, professor and founder of Engineers without Borders - USA

- **Human Condition: David L. Heymann, M.D.**, Geneva, Switzerland, physician, an assistant director general of the World Health Organization 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

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### **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).

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