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Appleaseed's "Good Apple Dinner" to Highlight New Enthusiasm for Addressing Poverty, Featuring Keynote Speaker Peter Edelman, the "Jim Wolf Equal Justice Award" and "Seeds of Justice Award"

LINCOLN, Nebraska - 9/19/07 - On the evening of September 26, 2007, the Nebraska Appleaseed Center for Law in the Public Interest (Nebraska Appleaseed) is hosting its second "Good Apple Dinner" in Omaha at Ironwood Country Club. The dinner will bring together community, business, civic, and political leaders, and Nebraska Appleaseed supporters from throughout the area, to celebrate the ongoing positive contributions Nebraska Appleaseed is making in Nebraska, the region, and nationally. This year's theme is the growing willingness by so many to tackle, through improved law and policy, the seemingly intractable causes of poverty and lost opportunity for thousands of Nebraska's children and families.

The keynote address, "From Poverty to Prosperity," will be given by Peter Edelman. Professor Edelman, a former top aide to Senator Robert F. Kennedy and author of "Searching for America's Heart: RFK and the Renewal of Hope," will speak about his years of experience working to eliminate poverty. Professor Edelman joined Georgetown Law faculty in 1982, where he teaches constitutional law, public interest lawyering, federal legislation, and social welfare law and policy. Professor Edelman took leave from Georgetown during President Clinton's first term to serve as Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services. Professor Edelman most recently served as co-chair of the "Task Force on Poverty" of the Center for American Progress. The Task Force released its report to national acclaim in April, 2007 and, recognizing the new energy and desire by Americans to address poverty, identified a set of new solutions to address the fact that too many Americans are living on the edge in today's economy. Thirty-seven million Americans are poor and millions more struggle each month to pay for basic necessities. The Task Force report calls for a national goal to cut poverty in half in 10 years and proposes a strategy to reach the goal. With the 2008 elections just ahead and new polls showing a growing desire by voters to address economic opportunity, mobility, and poverty, this talk by Professor Edelman could not be more timely.

The "Jim Wolf Equal Justice Award," given to honor a Nebraskan who has made significant contributions to equal justice for all in his or her career, in the spirit of the late Jim Wolf of Albion, will be awarded to Nebraska Appleaseed founder and former Executive Director Milo Mumgaard. Mumgaard served as Executive Director for Nebraska Appleaseed's first 11 years, and led its growth into a nationally recognized public interest legal organization in a state with little previous public interest legal tradition. Under his leadership, Nebraska Appleaseed has become a national leader in addressing the rights of public assistance recipients, working poor families, children in foster care, and new immigrants. Throughout his career, Mumgaard has been a creative, compassionate, and common sense voice for fairness, justice and opportunity for all Nebraskans.

The "Seeds of Justice Award," given to honor significant contributions towards positive public policy reform, will be given to the legal team in the pathbreaking federal class action lawsuit, Carson P. v. Heineman. This multiple lawyer and law firm pro bono legal team was created by Nebraska

Appleaseed to demand reform through the courts to Nebraska's broken foster care system. These law firms and lawyers are being recognized for their willingness to organize and implement this major federal lawsuit, with its goal of helping to improve the lives of thousands of Nebraska's most vulnerable children. The legal team was a unique combination of national and local law firms, local Fellows of the American College of Trial Lawyers (an involvement spearheaded by the late Kevin Colleran, the Chair of the American College of Trial Lawyers' Nebraska Access to Justice Committee), and national and state public interest law projects. The legal team not only created the first significant comprehensive legal challenge to Nebraska's broken foster care system, but opened the door to a range of other legal actions that are truly helping accomplish meaningful reform for Nebraska's children in foster care. The legal team honorees are: Pro Bono Counsel: Gene Summerlin, Marnie Jensen (Ogborn, Summerlin & Ogborn, Lincoln); Stanley Adelman, Anne Auten (DLA Piper, Chicago, Illinois); Of Counsel (as members of Nebraska's Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers): Kevin Colleran (posthumously)(Cline, Williams, Wright, Johnson & Oldfather, Lincoln); Edward Tricker (Woods & Aitken, Lincoln); Thomas Grennan (Gross & Welch, Omaha).

"Nebraskans are taking a new and energetic approach to insure economic opportunity for all. There's a growing recognition that too many low-income children and families are struggling day-to-day to meet their basic needs, and can't find a decent opportunity for a brighter future," said Executive Director Rebecca Gould. "We're so excited that into this picture have stepped several thoughtful initiatives that recognize targeted investments in our children and families, that along with more helpful public policies, will improve these opportunities. The enthusiasm is built around the realization we can do so much better, and this evening will highlight and honor that reality."

Nebraska Appleaseed, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest law project, is a national leader in addressing social problems facing vulnerable children without loving and permanent homes, low-income families working hard to make ends meet, and new immigrants seeking a better life. Nebraska Appleaseed's current year action plan and description of its five program areas, significant litigation and policy reform successes, and broad-based accomplishments can be found at neappleseed.org.

Nebraska Appleaseed is a part of the Appleaseed network of independent state-based public interest law centers working to identify and address social injustices. The Appleaseed network seeks to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise by addressing root causes and producing practical, systemic solutions with broad implication. For more information visit appleseednetwork.org.

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