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CONTACT: KATHI PETERSEN
828.712.1286 or kpcommunications@charter.net

THE HOLIDAYS MEANS IT'S TIME TO GIVE THANKS FOR THE BEES

Thanksgiving spread would be sparse were it not for bees to pollinate the food supply

(Asheville, N.C.) – Imagine your Thanksgiving plate without squash, cranberry sauce, cauliflower or turnips. Enjoy that stuffing with chestnuts? Might have to substitute mushrooms. And if your favorite holiday dessert is pumpkin pie with coffee, you better choose another pie — as long as it's not made with berries, apples or nuts. While you're at it, choose a different beverage, too.

If this bleak prospect makes you lose your appetite, take note. When you give thanks at your table this year, salute the honey bees for the annual cornucopia. From blueberries to Brussels sprouts, carrots to coconuts, walnuts to watermelons, honey bees pollinate the plants that provide much of what we eat — at Thanksgiving and year-round.

But the role of bees in traditional holiday meals is threatened by the potential harmful impacts of the phenomenon scientists call Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD, which jeopardizes the bee population — and the food supply — in North America. With Thanksgiving approaching, Mel Hughes, co-founder of the Asheville, N.C.-based *A Bee Lover's Garden*, gives a way for consumers to support honey bees by growing bee-friendly flowers and plants that provide the nutrition the insects need.

A Bee Lover's Garden offers 2010 calendars on art-quality, recycled paper with drawings and descriptions of flowers that attract honey bees. Each month lists easy ways to help feed and shelter bees. The frameable drawings are by renowned artist and illustrator Jay Pfeil of Black Mountain, N.C., co-founder of the national, grassroots effort. Future calendar editions will feature Pfeil's illustrations of fruit trees, herbs, vegetables and other bee-friendly plants that grow in yards and gardens.

“With major food-related holidays coming up, it's important to remember the vital role honey bees have in the ecosystem. Just as bees help provide our food supply, we need to love them back by nurturing healthy honey bee habitats,” Hughes says. “We encourage everyone as they enjoy their holiday meals to give thanks for the bees.”

Hughes' efforts have been endorsed by agriculture officials and beekeeping professionals, including Kim Flottum, editor of *Bee Culture* magazine and an advisor to the White House beekeeping staff. In addition, beekeeping organizations across the country are using *A Bee Lover's Garden* calendar as their own fundraising tool.

The Web site for the initiative, www.abeeloversgarden.com, provides information about CCD, which researchers say could be caused by pesticides, parasites, a new virus or an insufficient food supply. A portion of net proceeds from sales of the calendars will go toward bee research through the Eastern Apicultural Society of North America's Foundation for Honey Bee Research. EAS is the largest non-commercial beekeeping organization in the United States and one of the largest in the world.

There's a lot at stake. More than a third of the food supply in the U.S. directly depends on pollination by bees, and another third indirectly.

"Our Web site and our calendar provide enough information for people to be part of the solution, whether they become backyard beekeepers, support bee research with a donation or write to elected officials to share their concern," Hughes says. "Even letting your grass grow a little taller can make a difference."

More about Mel Hughes and Jay Pfeil

Mary Ellen "Mel" Hughes is founding principal of *A Bee Lover's Garden*. She is a successful [serial entrepreneur](#), whose previous ventures include a line of specialty food products that were sold across the country and at the world-famous Harrods, in London. Hughes readily admits she's not a scientist, nor a beekeeper, but that she "loves food." Says Hughes: "The very first time I heard about the mysterious disappearance of our honey bees, I realized this was a very urgent and potentially devastating agricultural and environmental problem. I wanted to do something about it. With *A Bee Lover's Garden*, we're going to make a difference on so many levels. And when the mystery of CCD is solved, that will be a wonderful thing. There's no shortage of good causes; we'll just move on to the next one."

Jay Pfeil is the artist for *A Bee Lover's Garden*, renowned for her award-winning renderings of flowers, trees and other botanicals. She is [a member of the Southern Highland Craft Guild](#) and supplies the Nature Art Gallery at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh and the River Gallery in Chattanooga, Tenn., among others. She was the only two-dimensional artist in North Carolina featured in the annual art edition of *Our State* magazine in July. About this campaign, Pfeil said: "I think of *A Bee Lover's Garden* as being totally a 'yes' project, meaning everything about it feels good. It feels good that we're raising money for research. It feels good that we're helping local beekeepers, and hiring people in this economy. It feels good that people are getting art for their walls at a very good price. And our customers can feel good, too, even about something as simple as leaving dandelions in their yards. They can feel good about truly making a difference."

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NOTE:

Calendars are available to media; PDFs are also available.

High-res photos of Mel Hughes and Jay Pfeil are available (single shots of each as well as a 2-shot).