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**Washington State LASER – a program of Pacific Science Center –
Announces Recipients of the 2006/2007 Science Education Advocate
Awards**

SEATTLE – Washington State LASER (Washington State Leadership and Assistance for Science Education Reform), with support from The Boeing Company, announced the recipients of the 2006/2007 Science Education Advocate Awards.

With 2006/2007 as its inaugural year, the Science Education Advocate awards go to five individuals, organizations, and/or project teams who exhibited outstanding advocacy for science education in the state of Washington by promoting the importance of science education among the general public and/or the education system.

“The intent of the Science Education Advocate Awards is to recognize and raise public awareness of advocacy across the broadest possible spectrum of science education efforts,” said Dennis Schatz, Vice President for Education at Pacific Science Center and Co-Director for LASER. “Awardees are being recognized for their advocacy efforts – not necessarily their work as science educators. We want to stress how important strong community support and advocacy is to developing science literacy in our state.”

Efforts at all levels of science education - including early learner, K-12, vocational, undergraduate, graduate, adult, and informal/public science education - were eligible for consideration.

The 2006/2007 Science Education Advocate Awards go to two organizations, two individuals and one team.

The five awardees receive \$5,000 each to be awarded to the not-for-profit organization or public education entity of their choice for use in its efforts on behalf of science education. The monetary reward as well as funding for the awards process was generously provided by the Boeing Company.

Recipients will be recognized at local awards ceremonies to highlight their achievements among their peers and within their communities. Details regarding dates and venues will follow soon. The five awardees are listed below:

Individual Awards

Lee Hood and Valerie Logan

Hood is director at The Institute for Systems Biology in Seattle. Logan is community liaison and fund developer for the Center for Inquiry Science at The Institute for Systems Biology.

In 1992 Logan and Hood established the University of Washington's Department of Molecular Biotechnology. While Logan and Hood were at the University they established several education reform programs including the Partnership for Inquiry-based Science, and The Family Science program.

In 2000, Hood and Logan left the University of Washington and started the independent, nonprofit, Institute for Systems Biology (ISB).

"Within ISB, we encourage our faculty members to engage in advocacy and programmatic activities related to K-12 science education," said Hood. "I have always believed that academics have four major responsibilities: scholarship, education, transfer of knowledge to society and community leadership."

Their \$5,000 donation will be awarded to The Institute for Systems Biology.

John "Skip" Paznokas

Paznokas is director at the Science Math Engineering Education Center (SMEEEC) at Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman.

For the past 20 years Paznokas has been involved with a variety of initiatives and participated on numerous task forces and education boards and committees involving science education K-20. Paznokas has maintained an equipment loan program for middle and high school science teachers since 1992.

As director of SMEEEC Paznokas brings together educators from WSU Colleges of Education, Engineering, Sciences and Agriculture, the University of Idaho, local K-12 educators and administrators and community leaders to focus discussions on issues of K-20 education.

"My primary goal in education is to help individuals of all ages develop the potential to become problem solvers involving science, mathematics or engineering concepts." said Paznokas. "To this end I have worked with kindergarten students to adults in classrooms as well as at community events such as the Lentil Festival in Pullman.

Paznokas's \$5,000 donation will be awarded to the Science Math Engineering Education Center.

Peggy Willcuts

Willcuts is elementary science coordinator/science specialist for the Walla Walla Public Schools.

As an advocate of science education in Washington State, Willcuts works at the local, regional, state and national levels for education reform. As the Elementary Science Coordinator for Walla Walla School District, Willcuts provides professional development for teachers in her district. In addition, she is active in Washington State LASER specifically to facilitate and provide the professional development (Initial Use and Follow-Up Trainings) for elementary teachers across the LASER Alliance.

Willcuts serves on the National Science Resources Center on the Advisory Board and is an adjunct instructor for Washington State University teaching the Science Methods course in the fall.

“My vision is to be a part of a system of science education whereby all students learn science that is taught by capable, knowledgeable teachers,” said Willcuts. “I have the vision that we could empower each student to become a scientifically literate person - someone who has an understanding of science and the nature of science such that it allows them the excitement and passion for the world around them.

Willcuts' \$5,000 donation will be awarded to the Walla Walla School District.

Organization Awards

American Electronics Association (AeA)

For most of the 50 years AeA has been in Washington State, the company has worked with educational institutions, organizations and policy makers to improve education, particularly in the areas of math, science and engineering. For the last 3 + years AeA has focused on implementing engineering programs in K-12 schools. The mission of its "Project Lead the Way" curriculum is to excite students about math and science through their application in engineering.

AeA and its member companies have been involved with a number of education organizations; LASER and MESA are two that it supports. The company also works closely with OSPI, the Washington Roundtable, and the Partnership for Learning to support math and science education reform efforts. In addition, AeA helped found the WA State Coalition for Engineering Education (WASCEE) which brings together, K-12, community colleges, universities, educational organizations and the private sector to support engineering education in the state.

The AeA's \$5,000 donation will be awarded to the AeA Electronics Education Foundation for math, science, and engineering education activities in Washington State.

LIGO Hanford Observatory (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory)

LIGO develops and collaborates in programs to promote science that are tailored to meet the needs of different ages, cultures and academic circumstances. In these endeavors the Observatory partners with formal and informal education organizations and community interests whenever possible. LIGO's contributions to these programs emphasize the project's role in an international effort to make the first direct detection of gravitational waves.

For K-12 groups LIGO offers field trips to the Observatory site that will serve roughly 900 students in 2006. In addition to learning about LIGO's search for gravitational waves, student guests interact with a dozen hands-on exhibits related to wave behavior and gravity. The exhibits are correlated to Washington State science standards. Nearly a dozen university groups will also visit in 2006, bringing science majors and education majors to the site.

Regional chapters of MESA and GEAR UP headquarter at WSU Tri-Cities have partnered with LIGO to bring classrooms of predominantly Hispanic student on field trips.

LIGO's \$5,000 donation will be awarded to the LIGO Hanford Observatory to support transportation expenses for field trips to the observatory.

More information regarding the awardees is at:
http://www.wastatelaser.org/_awards/archive.asp.

Washington State LASER is a private public partnership with leadership from Pacific Science Center, Battelle and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Additional partners include Educational Service Districts, participating school districts, Washington Science Teachers Association, higher education institutions and the National Science Resource Center (NSRC), which is a non-profit science education organization sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute and the National Academies. LASER receives financial support from the State Legislature, the Boeing Company, Battelle, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Agilent Technologies Foundation, Merck and Intel.

For more information about Washington State LASER and the Science Education Advocate Awards, please visit <http://www.wastatelaser.org>.

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Pacific Science Center inspires a lifelong interest in science, mathematics and technology by engaging diverse communities through interactive and innovative exhibits and programs. Pacific Science Center began as the United States Science Pavilion during the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. Millions came to explore the wonders of science during the World's Fair and upon the closing ceremonies, the Science Pavilion was given new life as the private, not-for-profit Pacific Science Center, becoming the first U.S. museum founded as a science and technology center. For more information about Pacific Science Center, please call (206) 443-2001 or visit the web site at www.pacsci.org. Pacific Science Center is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and relies on admissions, memberships, and donations to continue our educational mission, programs, and exhibits.

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