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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Seed Savers Exchange names Aaron Whaley Acting Executive Director
On resignation of Executive Director George DeVault***

Decorah, Iowa – Seed Savers Exchange, Inc., a leading non-profit organization dedicated to saving and sharing heirloom seeds, announces today the resignation of the Executive Director and President George DeVault.

DeVault, 58, held the position since October 1, 2008. He and his wife relocated to Iowa from their 20-acre organic farm and home of 27 years in Pennsylvania. DeVault has an impressive, award-winning background that includes editing for prestigious farm journals and books at Rodale Inc. He has written and edited articles and books on a variety of agricultural topics, and is a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food and Society Policy Fellow.

Explaining his resignation, DeVault said, “My wife and I are, in a word, ‘homesick’ for Pennsylvania.” DeVault expects to continue to work with Seed Savers Exchange in a variety of capacities for years to come. “We may be leaving Decorah, but we’re certainly not leaving the Seed Savers family.”

Seed Savers Exchange can boast a long list of accomplishments under DeVault’s leadership and tenure. At an annual budget of around \$4,000,000, the organization has grown from approximately 8,000 members to over 11,000. Commercial seed sales in 2009 were well above the previous year. With his background as a journalist and photographer, DeVault has skillfully expanded and upgraded the organization’s publications.

Record numbers attended events at Seed Savers Exchange in 2009, including the Greg Brown benefit concert, the Annual Convention, and the Harvest Festival. In the past year, Seed Savers Exchange was highlighted on the Martha Stewart Show, and its heirloom seeds were featured in public demonstration plots at the New York Botanical Garden, the Kansas City Botanical Garden, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s People’s Garden project.

Speaking for the Board of Directors, Chair Amy P. Goldman said, “We were saddened to learn of George’s resignation, but we understand his reasons for leaving. George was a boon to Seed Savers Exchange, and we are deeply appreciative. In just a short period of time, George managed to endow Seed Savers Exchange with new energy and vitality; he has set new standards of excellence; and he was respected and admired not only by the members, staff and Board of SSE, but by the wider community as well.”

DeVault will wind down his duties at Seed Savers Exchange and transition the job to Aaron Whaley. Whaley has been named by the Board of Directors as Acting Executive Director and President. Goldman said of Whaley, “Aaron is uniquely qualified for this job and the Board has full confidence that he can advance his family’s legacy at Seed Savers Exchange in this new and challenging role.”

Whaley is the son of Seed Savers Exchange co-founders Kent Whealy and Diane Ott Whealy. Whaley, 37, grew up at Seed Savers Exchange, and has worked at the organization in a full-time professional capacity since 1996, primarily as head of the commercial seed sales operation. He has degrees in Biology and Public Communications from Luther College. With his wife and three young sons, he lives on a farm adjacent to Seed Savers Exchange, where the family gardens and raises chickens and Ancient White Park cattle.

Diane Ott Whealy, who is a Vice President at Seed Savers Exchange, expressed her pride at her son’s elevation to the Acting Executive Director position. Returning the compliment, Whaley said, “It is a great honor for me to work for Seed Savers Exchange. To watch the dream my parents had become a reality, literally from the ground up, has been amazing. My goal is to make sure that Seed Savers Exchange remains fresh, healthy, and sustainable.”

Founded in 1975, Seed Savers Exchange operates an 890-acre farm in northeast Iowa where thousands of rare fruit, vegetable, and other plant varieties are regenerated and preserved in a central collection. Its mission is saving the world’s diverse, but endangered, garden heritage for future generations by building a network of people committed to collecting, conserving, and sharing heirloom seeds and plants, while educating people about the value of genetic and cultural diversity.