



Seed Savers Exchange
Decorah, Iowa

April 4, 2018

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of our co-founder and first Executive Director Kent Whealy. He played a critical role not only in the formative years of Seed Savers Exchange, but in the creation of a movement focused around the preservation of the genetic diversity of America's garden and food heritage, a cause that has only increased in relevance over the 42 years of the organization's history. Kent's passion for open-pollinated heirloom varieties began with two varieties of seeds passed along to his then-wife Diane Ott Whealy by her Bavarian grandparents. This led to the formation of Seed Savers Exchange in 1975, with its initial focus being on the creation of what would become an annual Yearbook, which was published to highlight open-pollinated, heirloom varieties available for sale or exchange in the United States. What began as a grass-roots operation slowly grew as others began sharing their seeds through the Yearbook, and as they came together to save these beloved varieties that were on the verge of disappearing. Over the years, the organization evolved to include a seed bank, collecting varieties of grains, vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers, and by the time of Kent's departure from the organization in 2007, Seed Savers Exchange was one of the largest nongovernmental seed banks in existence. In 1990, Whealy was the recipient of a fellowship from the MacArthur Fellows program for his work in agriculture.

Kent was a complex, passionate visionary whose later work focused on biodiversity, organic farming, and the Slow Food movement, as well as concerns over the use of pesticides and the impact of such chemicals on the environment. He served as a trustee for the Ceres Trust and was the editor and publisher of a seven-volume book on the apples of North America.

The board and staff at Seed Savers Exchange would like to extend our condolences to his wife Judy Kern, his children, and family as well as all of those who have connected to the movement over the years.