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For Immediate Release

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Vermont Maple Industry Announces Three Awards VMSMA Elects New Officers

The Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association held its annual meeting and banquet at the Vermont Farm Show on January 27, 2009 and honored two industry leaders with awards. The Sumner Hill Williams Memorial Cup is presented jointly each year by the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association (VMSMA), the Vermont Maple Industry Council (VMIC) and the Vermont Maple Foundation (VMF) to honor an individual for outstanding service and dedication to the Vermont maple industry. The award (previously called the Presidents Award) was renamed in January, 2000 in memory of Sumner Williams, then Assistant Director of the University of Vermont Proctor Maple Research Center. Sumner was a sugar maker, researcher and educator and a friend to anyone involved in the maple industry. At the time of his death, Sumner was serving as President of the Vermont Maple Industry council.

The Sumner Hill Williams Memorial cup was presented to George Cook, UVM Extension Specialist. George is well respected not only here in the Vermont agricultural community and throughout the international maple industry for his years of dedicated service. This former Vermont Maple King received degrees from both Vermont Technical College and the University of Vermont. After graduation, George accepted a Vocational Agricultural Instructor position at Peoples Academy in Morrisville. While teaching there he received the VT Outstanding Young Teacher Award. George helped start a Rescue Squad and is still an active member some 34 years later. In 1978 George began working for the UVM Extension Service in Lamoille County as a County Agent and in 1995 became a UVM Extension Specialist for maple and farm safety, two subjects which are both very close to his heart. In 2000 he received a Recognition Award from the North American Maple Syrup Council, which is an international maple organization, for his years of work in the maple industry. George also serves on the Vermont Maple Foundation board of directors.

The Vermont Maple Industry Council (VMIC) presented the Maple Person of the Year 2005 Award to Rick Marsh. Rick has served on the council's Board of Directors and as President of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association for the past three years and held the office of Vice President for five years prior to becoming president. For the past several years Rick has been very involved serving on several different committees and organizations within our state and international maple industry. Currently Rick serves of the UVM Extension State Advisory Committee and for the past thirteen years he has been a member of the Vermont Maple Foundation.. He served as president of Lamoille County's maple organization for ten years before becoming president of the state association. Currently Rick is also Vice President of the North American Maple Syrup

Council which is an international organization which raises funding for maple research. Rick also represents the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association as a member of the Board of Directors for the International Maple Syrup Institute.

Rick and his wife Diane own and operate the Vermont Maple Outlet in Jeffersonville, a retail and mail order business they started in 1989. They also produce their own maple syrup each spring and the coming maple season will mark the hundredth season their family has produced maple syrup from their sugar bush, they are the fifth generation to do so.

The Outstanding Sugar Maker award is presented annually to a Vermont sugar maker and is nominated by the VMSMA county directors and then voted on by the VMSMA executive committee. This year's recipient is Leslie Ham of Sheffield. Leslie has seen many changes in the Vermont maple industry throughout his years of producing maple syrup. He has been sugaring his entire life, starting first with horses and buckets and now using tubing with vacuum. He has been a member of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association for many years and has served on our board of directors for nearly 15 years. His sugarhouse door is always open during the sugaring season, and he welcomes schools and other groups for educational tours and to share the experience of producing maple syrup. He is also very active in his local community volunteering many hours of service while serving as a past Town Lister, over 30 years on the volunteer fire dept., more than 25 years as Justice of the Peace and is also the 911 coordinator. He frequently donates maple syrup to local groups for fund raisers and each year he donates a significant amount to be used at the Caledonia County Fair Sugarhouse. In 1988 when the sugarhouse at the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center was destroyed by fire Leslie donated a large amount of lumber for the construction of the new sugarhouse which he cut and sawed himself. He also cut and sawed the lumber for his new sugarhouse which was built 1991, as well as most of the lumber used to built the sugarhouse at the Caledonia County Fairgrounds.

The VMSMA directors voted in a new slate of officers at the annual meeting. Rick Marsh of Jeffersonville was re-elected President, David Mance of Shaftsbury was re-elected Vice-President and Mary Croft was re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

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