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## Keep Texas Beautiful Honors REAL School Gardens, Westcliff Elementary School and Kerry Renta

FORT WORTH, Texas – July 1, 2009 – REAL School Gardens, Westcliff Elementary School and Kerry Renta were honored for educating children through outdoor learning experiences at the Keep Texas Beautiful state conference in Houston June 10.

Schools and organizations received awards at the event, with REAL School Gardens taking first place in the civic group category for Keep Texas Beautiful's Sadie Ray Graff Award. This award recognizes educators and educational institutions that encourage youth involvement and promote the Keep Texas Beautiful mission through environmental education.

Westcliff and Renta won second place in the award's Elementary School category for their efforts to bring school gardens to the community. Renta is a third grade educator who also serves as REAL School Garden's design consultant charged with designing four new school gardens this year.

"We're humbled by this recognition from Keep Texas Beautiful, an organization we have deep respect and admiration for and whose values we share," said Jeanne McCarty, executive director of REAL School Gardens.

"I'm also very pleased that Keep Texas Beautiful recognizes the outstanding efforts of our REAL School garden at Westcliff and Kerry Renta who is helping to provide better outdoor learning experiences for children throughout the Fort Worth area," McCarty said.

One of the many things Renta loves about his home state is its natural beauty, Renta said. He is grateful for the work of organizations like REAL School Gardens and Keep Texas Beautiful to protect and nurture it. "They are striving to get our Texas kids educated about the importance of that precious natural resource, the land we live on," Renta said.

"Every morning in third grade at Westcliff we honor the Texas flag and pledge allegiance to keeping it indivisible. I like to think that means keeping its beauty intact."

Scott Feille, program director for REAL School Gardens, gave a keynote address at the conference, titled

“Changing the World, One School Garden at a Time.” In his presentation, Feille discussed the overlapping missions of Keep Texas Beautiful and REAL School Gardens and the benefits of school gardens for today’s youth.

Feille remarked that today’s youth are no different than other generations. “That sense of wonder and urgency and creativity is in each one of them, but they’re on hold. They’re waiting. What are they waiting for? They’re waiting for us to take them outside.”

### **About REAL School Gardens**

The mission of REAL School Gardens is to cultivate relationships with elementary school communities to create learning gardens that raise hope, spark imaginations and connect children to nature.

Currently, REAL School Gardens works with 57 schools, ensuring that more than 30,000 children and more than 1,400 educators have daily access to nature through school gardens in North Texas. With plans to reach more students and school communities across the country, the organization is itself growing.

### **About Keep Texas Beautiful**

A certified state affiliate of Keep American Beautiful, Keep Texas Beautiful is a statewide 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to beautifying and improving community environments through programming and education addressing litter prevention, beautification and waste reduction. Keep Texas Beautiful works with affiliate communities, government agencies, businesses, civic groups and volunteers to ensure that every Texan has the opportunity to make Texas the cleanest, most beautiful state in the nation.