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FROM: THE LASKER FOUNDATION

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UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE CELEBRATES BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CHAMPION MARY LASKER WITH NEW STAMP

*Founder of the Lasker Foundation Will Appear On Stamp as Part of the
“Distinguished Americans” Series*

(New York, NY- February 24, 2009) -- Mary Woodard Lasker (1900-1994), an ardent advocate of medical research for major diseases including cancer, heart disease, stroke, and AIDS, and founder of the Lasker Foundation, will be immortalized on U.S. postage. The United States Postal Service said today it will release the new Mary Lasker stamp on May 14, 2009 as part of its “Distinguished Americans” series.

The release of the stamp coincides with a renewed federal commitment to biomedical research, including additional funding for the National Institutes of Health, which Mary Lasker helped build.



**Mary Lasker Honored on
U.S. Postage Stamp**

“The National Institutes of Health and medical research in the U.S. would simply not be as successful as they are today without the many contributions of Mary Lasker and her Foundation,” said Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni, the immediate past director of the National Institutes of Health and a Lasker Foundation board member. “Millions of lives were saved throughout the world thanks to her vision and dedication.”

Mary Lasker formed the New York City-based Lasker Foundation in 1942 to increase widespread support for research by creating awareness of the public benefits of medical science. The annual Lasker Awards are the centerpiece of the Foundation's activities. More than 300 Lasker Awards have been presented since the program's inception in 1945. Seventy-six Lasker laureates have later received the Nobel Prize, including 28 in the last two decades. The Foundation is widely credited with inspiring U.S. Presidents and Congress to greatly expand federal funding for medical research, particularly through the National Institutes of Health.

“Mary Lasker worked tirelessly to promote our investment in medical research. She knew that this investment pays huge public dividends, developing the techniques and medicines that prolong life and prevent disease,” said Dr. Maria C. Freire, President of the Lasker Foundation. “The release of the Lasker postage stamp coincides with a much-needed boost in the NIH budget as part of the economic stimulus package. Mary would be very pleased.”

Created by Mark Summers, the stamp artwork is based on an undated, black and white photograph. Summers is noted for his scratchboard technique, a style distinguished by a dense network of lines etched with exquisite precision.

Mary Woodard was born in Watertown, Wisconsin, on November 30, 1900. Her father was a banker, and her mother was a civic leader whose activism instilled in her daughter a lifelong interest in urban beautification. Mary Woodard graduated *cum laude* in 1923 from Radcliffe College, studied briefly at Oxford, and then settled in New York City, where she worked as an art dealer and began to build an impressive art collection of her own. During the Great Depression, she also launched the successful dress pattern company.

In 1940, Mary Woodard married advertising mogul Albert Davis Lasker (1880-1952). Committed to promoting his wife's passion for medical research, Albert Lasker sold his advertising firm, and in 1942 the Laskers created the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation to advance medical research into the major causes of disability and death. Skillfully coordinating the support of the media, medical experts, U.S. Presidents, Congress, and other funders, Mary Lasker built a powerful lobby for medical research, especially directed at the expansion of the National Institutes of Health to include research centers concentrating on specific diseases.

Throughout her life, Mary Lasker fought to encourage funding for medical research for cancer, heart disease, stroke, mental illness, blindness, cerebral palsy, arthritis, osteoporosis, growth disorders, and AIDS. She served on numerous public health advisory boards. Especially passionate about the fight against cancer, she led the reorganization and growth of the American Cancer Society and established its research program; advocated more aggressive applied cancer research, including chemotherapy; and became the driving force behind the National Cancer Act, which launched the national “war on cancer” in 1971. As a result of her work, she became one of the most influential laypersons in medical research in the 20th century.

In 1969, Mary Lasker was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, and she received a Congressional Gold Medal in 1989.

In addition to her advocacy of health-care research and funding, she is remembered as a prominent patron of urban beautification. She supported projects in New York and Washington, D.C., that included planting hundreds of thousands of trees and flowers, many of which she personally donated. As a tribute to Mary Lasker’s work, a pink tulip was named for her during the 1980s.

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