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Poitier, Kwasniewski, Roberts, McEwan to Receive The 28th Annual Common Wealth Awards

2007 honorees are distinguished achievers who have made their mark in the world community

WILMINGTON, Del., March 23 /PRNewswire/ -- A group of internationally acclaimed leaders and achievers will be honored for their lifetime accomplishments with the 28th Annual Common Wealth Awards of Distinguished Service. These prestigious awards recognize individuals who have advanced and enriched society through their outstanding contributions.

The 2007 Common Wealth Award winners are:

- Sidney Poitier, Academy Award-winning actor, cinematic trailblazer and role model for actors, for Dramatic Arts;
- Aleksander Kwasniewski, former two-term president of the Republic of Poland; co-founder of the Social Democratic Party, for Government;
- Cokie Roberts, veteran broadcast journalist and best-selling author; political analyst for ABC News and NPR senior news analyst, for Mass Communications;
- Ian McEwan, acclaimed and award-winning British novelist, short-story and screen writer, for Literature.

The honorees will receive a shared prize of \$200,000 at the Common Wealth Awards ceremony, hosted by PNC Bank, Delaware, April 28 at the Hotel du Pont in Wilmington.

The final selection of the honorees is the decision of the Executory of the Common Wealth Trust. PNC Bank, Delaware has been trustee and administrator for the Common Wealth Awards since their inception. PNC Bank, Delaware is a member of The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. (NYSE: PNC).

The Common Wealth Awards of Distinguished Service were first presented in 1979 by the Common Wealth Trust, created under the will of the late Ralph Hayes, an influential business executive and philanthropist. Hayes conceived the awards to reward and encourage the best of human performance worldwide. In their 28-year history, the Common Wealth Awards have conferred \$4 million in prize money to 161 honorees of international renown. The awards are funded by the Common Wealth Trust.

Ralph Hayes served on the board of directors of PNC Bank, Delaware's predecessor banks from 1935 to 1965. Through the Common Wealth Awards, he sought to recognize outstanding achievement in eight disciplines: dramatic arts, literature, science, invention, mass communications, public service, government, and sociology. The awards also provide an incentive for people to make future contributions to the world community.

"The Common Wealth Awards symbolize achievement, excellence and leadership, and the 2007 honorees possess these qualities in abundance," said Connie Bond Stuart, president of PNC Bank, Delaware. "Each honoree has traveled a different road to success, and, on the journey, has left indelible marks on modern culture. It's exciting to see Ralph Hayes's charitable legacy come alive once again through these accomplished people."

"The Common Wealth Award winners, past and present, have set the standards for excellence for generations to come," said Stuart.

The roster of past honorees reveals the caliber of talent and the global scope of the awardees and their achievements. Among the past winners are 11 Nobel laureates, including human rights leader Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former statesman Henry Kissinger and author Toni Morrison. Other winners include former Secretary of State Colin Powell; children's television icon, the late Fred Rogers; Queen Noor of Jordan; stage and screen director Mike Nichols; primatologist Jane Goodall; ocean explorer Robert Ballard; actress Meryl Streep; television journalist Walter Cronkite; and World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee.

[Biographies for each honoree are included with this release.]

Sidney Poitier

Sidney Poitier, 80, pioneering film legend, wins the 2007 Common Wealth Award for Dramatic Arts.

Poitier has been a political and artistic trailblazer for more than half a century. He is an Academy Award-winning actor, writer, director, and diplomat, serving as the Bahamas' ambassador to Japan and to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Poitier rose from poverty in the Bahamas and went on to forge an unprecedented cinematic career. His courageous struggle to achieve equality for himself and other black actors has opened doors for new generations of artists.

Poitier has had an immeasurable impact on American culture since the early 1950s when he began appearing in a string of landmark movies that addressed issues of racial and social inequality. The films that would make him one of the world's most popular and respected actors include No Way Out, The Blackboard Jungle, Lilies of the Field, The Defiant Ones, A Raisin in the Sun, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, To Sir, With Love and In the Heat of the Night.

Through his commanding performances, Poitier broke down Hollywood's racial barriers and stereotypes, while holding firm to his personal and artistic standards. As a black actor, he achieved many cinematic milestones: the first to be nominated for a Best Actor Academy Award (The Defiant Ones, 1958), the first to star as a romantic lead (Paris Blues, 1961), the first to win the Oscar for best actor (Lilies of the Field, 1963) and the first to become the number one box office star in the country (1968).

His second book, a spiritual autobiography titled, The Measure Of A Man, reached bestseller status when first published in 2000, and recently achieved that rank again when chosen for the Oprah Book Club.

In 2002, Poitier received an honorary Academy Award in recognition of his extraordinary and influential work.

Poitier is married to Joanna Shimkus Poitier. He has six daughters, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Aleksander Kwasniewski

Aleksander Kwasniewski, 52, former president of the Republic of Poland, receives the 2007 Common Wealth Award for Government.

During his two terms in office (1995 - 2005), President Kwasniewski established himself as a trusted advocate for his people. He is considered by many to be an icon for the new Polish government.

Aleksander Kwasniewski participated in the famous "Round-Table" negotiations in Poland that finally brought the peaceful transformation of Poland and the whole Central and Eastern Europe from communism to democracy. He is a co-founding member and first chairman of the Social Democratic Party of the Republic of Poland. He won the presidential elections for the first time in 1995, defeating the incumbent, Lech Walesa. He is also co-author of the new democratic Constitution of Poland, which he signed into law on July 16, 1997.

President Kwasniewski is a great advocate of Poland's membership in both NATO and the European Union. It was under his leadership that Poland finally joined NATO in 1999. He is an active supporter of further alliance enlargement under the "open door" policy. A strong proponent of European integration, President Kwasniewski campaigned for approval of the European Union accession treaty in 2003, and saw Poland become a member on May 1, 2004.

Aleksander Kwasniewski was one of the leading figures in European politics. Author of numerous local and regional initiatives, he decisively joined the global war on terror and backed the decision to send Polish troops to the war against Saddam Hussein. A long-standing supporter of Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, Aleksander Kwasniewski inspired the international mediation efforts during the Orange Revolution, helping the young democracy in Ukraine to prevail.

During his presidency, he courageously confronted the past, significantly contributing to the reconciliation between Poles and the German, Jewish and Ukrainian people.

Cokie Roberts

Cokie Roberts, 63, veteran broadcast journalist, receives the 2007 Common Wealth Award for Mass Communications.

Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News where for fifteen years she has covered Congress, politics and public policy. She also serves as senior news analyst for National Public Radio. From 1996-2002 she and Sam Donaldson co-anchored the weekly ABC interview program This Week.

In her more than thirty years in broadcasting, Roberts has won countless awards, including two Emmys. She has been inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame and was cited by the American Women in Radio and Television as one of the 50 greatest women in the history of broadcasting.

In addition to her appearances on the airwaves, Roberts, along with her husband, Steven V. Roberts, writes a weekly column syndicated in newspapers around the country by United Media. The Roberts are also contributing editors to USA Magazine, and together they wrote *From this Day Forward*, an account of their more than thirty-five year marriage and other marriages in American history. The book immediately went onto The New York Times bestseller list, following a run of half a year on the list by Cokie Roberts' other book, *We Are Our Mothers' Daughters*. The number one bestseller is an account of women's roles and relationships throughout American history. Cokie's most recent book, *Founding Mothers*, explores the wives, daughters, philosophers and others who influenced the men behind the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. *Founding Mothers* was in the top ten of both The New York Times and Amazon bestseller lists.

Cokie Roberts also serves on the boards of several non-profit institutions and in 2006 was appointed to the newly formed President's Commission on Service and Civic Participation. She is the mother of two and grandmother of six.

Roberts resides in Washington, D.C.

Ian McEwan

Ian McEwan, 58, British author of international renown, receives the 2007 Common Wealth Award for Literature.

McEwan is a literary giant, considered to be one of Britain's greatest contemporary writers. In 1975 his volume of short stories *First Love, Last Rites* was published to sensational critical acclaim. Anthony Thwaite described the book as "a brilliant performance ... with an originality astonishing for a writer still in his twenties." It won the Somerset Maugham Award and revitalized the short story form. In 1978, his second collection of stories, *In Between the Sheets*, with the now familiar McEwan themes of adolescent sexual awakenings, the perverse and the macabre, shocked the English literary establishment.

In 1978, *The Cement Garden*, his first novel, was published to great acclaim -- "a near perfect novelist" (*The Spectator*). Robert Towers, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, described the novel as "a shocking book, morbid, full of repellent imagery -- and irresistibly readable."

In 1980, the BBC production of *The Imitation Game* gained instant recognition -- "A play for today of rare distinction" (Clive James). In 1981, his second novel, *The Comfort of Strangers*, was published and, again, hailed as the work of one of the most outstanding writers of the 20th century. *The Comfort of Strangers* was shortlisted for Britain's prestigious Booker Prize in 1981.

The Child in Time, his third novel, published in 1987, won the Whitbread Award for the best novel of that year. *The Innocent*, published in 1990, was an extraordinary achievement. He took a genre--until then dominated by Deighton and Le Carre -- and completely reinvented it. "It displays the immaculate artistry we have come to expect from one of Britain's most highly respected novelists," *Sunday Times*.

Black Dogs was published in 1993 and, once again, the plaudits followed: " ... testament to one of recent fiction's most remarkable regeneration: McEwan's transformation from a purveyor of knowingly nasty tales to a novelist unsurpassed for his responsive, responsible humanity." Peter Kemp, *Sunday Times*.

Enduring Love was published in September 1997 to huge critical and commercial success. The film adaptation was released in November 2004.

In 1998, McEwan was awarded the Booker Prize for Amsterdam, a psychological thriller and satire, hailed as "a bold, brilliant and marvelously entertaining departure from everything he has written before."

McEwan's 12th novel, Atonement, was published in 2002 and went on to be a huge bestseller. The novel prompted the Washington Post Book World to proclaim, "No one writing fiction in the English language surpasses Ian McEwan." Saturday, published in 2005, became a bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic as it explores a post-9/11 world. Publishers Weekly called Saturday "a wise and poignant portrait of the way we live now."

McEwan lives in London. His latest novel is On Chesil Beach (2007).

SOURCE PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.