



Contacts:

Diane Almond, Habitat Director
828-684-8488
diane@honeybeesandheather.com

Phyllis Stiles, Director
828-545-4282
beecityusa@gmail.com

May 18, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bee City USA Hosts *Pollination Celebration!*: Leader of National USDA Bee Lab Is Keynote Speaker

Marking its second anniversary, Bee City USA announced that Dr. Jeff Pettis, lead scientist at the USDA Bee Research Lab in Beltsville, MD, will be the keynote presenter for this year's *Pollination Celebration!*, underwritten by Tupelo Honey and Ingles Markets. On Tuesday June 17, Dr. Pettis will address area beekeepers on "Challenges for Today's Beekeepers" at the Mountain Horticulture Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River. On Wednesday, June 18, his topic is "Give Bees a Chance: The Pollination Puzzle" presented at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville.

Dr. Pettis heads a group made up of six universities, the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency, that was formed in 2007 to investigate and identify the cause(s) of the devastating loss of honey bee colonies, a phenomenon called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). He predicted in 2007 what the consortium would come to conclude in 2013-- CCD is due to a combination, not a single, cause. Since then Pettis has travelled the globe, worked with commercial beekeepers (most recently in California almond orchards for what is the largest pollination event in the world), met with government officials, attended summit gatherings of pesticide manufacturers and farmers and served as national spokesperson on honey bee issues. According to Pettis, "We are one weather event or high winter bee loss away from serious disruption of our food supply."

As research leader of the USDA-ARS Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Dr. Pettis leads a team effort to improve colony health by limiting the impact of pests and diseases on honey bee colonies. His research areas include IPM (Integrated Pest Management) techniques to reduce the impacts of parasitic mites and disease, effects of pesticides and pathogens on queen health and longevity, and host-parasite relationships and bee behavior. Dr. Pettis received bachelors and masters degrees from the University of Georgia and his doctoral degree in Entomology from Texas A&M University.

"We are grateful and honored that Dr. Pettis was able to include a visit to Asheville in his busy schedule. We could think of no one better qualified to provide a big picture perspective that is both broad and deep on this complex and vital subject of pollination, bee health and our food supply," said Phyllis Stiles, founder and director of Bee City USA.

If you want to go:

Tuesday, June 17: *“Challenges for Today's Beekeepers:*

Pettis will share his research exploring the role of pesticides in colony and queen health and the reasons for rapid queen failure; testing for interactions between, viruses, Nosema and pesticide exposure; and, exploring the role of diverse bee forage on colony health.

Mountain Horticulture Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC

Reception: 6:30; Program: 7:00

Co-hosted by the Henderson County Beekeepers

\$10 Suggested Donation

Wednesday, June 18: *Give Bees a Chance: The Pollination Puzzle”*

A special event geared for a general public audience, and designed to provoke questions, conversation, and possible answers. Honey from invasive plants, kudzu and Japanese knotweed, will be available for tasting.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville (corner of Edwin and Charlotte)

Silent Auction, Exhibit, Reception at 6:00; Program at 7:00

\$10 Suggested Donation

The puzzle: how to pull back from what Dr. Pettis called a “turning point” (TIME cover story Aug 2013) and still feed the millions (billions?) of people whose lives depends on the food? How to provide pollination services for millions of acres of fruits, vegetables and seed crops that are *increasing* every year with an ever *decreasing* supply of honey bees (and native bees) and commercial beekeepers. How can all of us, every single one of us, see the ways that we may be inadvertently contributing to this dilemma and then discover the endless possibilities--tiny and large--to contribute to and participate in the solutions?

Join us to learn how insects vital to *our* health, face unprecedented challenges to *their* health. For information about these events, or to learn how to become a Bee City USA, visit beecityusa.org. Other ***Pollination Celebration!*** events include art exhibits about pollinators at Blue Spiral 1 and K2 Studio, Asheville GreenWorks Father’s Day Garden + Pollinator Tour, a world honey tasting at Asheville Bee Charmer, the Wings of Life documentary at Fine Arts Theatre and, for children, monarch rescue and pollinator walk programs.

Bee City USA urges municipalities, individuals, organizations, corporations, and communities to plant for the pollinators and avoid or minimize pesticide use. When Asheville, North Carolina, became the first Bee City USA designee in June 2012, the City Council committed to participate in an annual celebration, ideally during National Pollinator Week. Learn more at beecityusa.org where the schedule is being continually updated.

###