

Record Number of Restaurants Nationwide Supporting UNICEF's Water Programs for Children Around the World

NEW YORK, March 19 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- More than 2,000 food and beverage outlets have joined the Tap Project to help UNICEF provide clean water to children around the world. The grassroots initiative -- which invites individuals to donate \$1, or more, for the tap water they normally get for free at participating restaurants -- will be launched today by UNICEF Ambassadors Lucy Liu and Marcus Samuelsson at an event hosted by Esquire Magazine in New York.

"This week tap water is the toast of New York City and almost two dozen other cities as Americans raise their glasses to help save children's lives," said Lucy Liu. Fresh from a trip to Cote d'Ivoire to see first hand the threat to child survival caused by the lack of access to clean drinking water, Lucy said a little can go a long way to provide children with what they need to survive.

Thousands of New Yorkers and 300 restaurants took part in the first Tap Project on March 22, 2007, raising over \$100,000. This year, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF is engaging communities by mobilizing volunteers nationwide with the goal of raising awareness of the Tap Project and recruiting restaurants to participate in the initiative. So far, more than 1,900 volunteers have signed up to recruit restaurants and promote the Tap Project.

To date, more than 2,000 restaurants in 39 states have signed on to participate during World Water Week, with a goal to raise \$1 million.

"The beauty of the Tap Project is its simplicity," said Caryl Stern, president and CEO, U.S. Fund for UNICEF. "Diners only need to donate \$1 or more for the tap water they normally get for free at participating restaurants"

On the weekend, Ms. Stern, along with Hip Hop mogul Russell Simmons, kicked off the Walk For Water, which is inspired by the 3-6 mile journey women and children make every day in water stressed countries. Hundreds of children walked one mile through New York's Riverside Park, carrying one gallon jugs of Tap water.

Visitors to the Tap Project website, with the help of a Google map, can identify restaurants nationwide participating in the Tap Project this year. It is accessible at tapproject.org.

Aside from New York food and beverage outlets in the following cities are participating in Tap: Dallas, Chicago, Portland, Richmond, Seattle, Boston, Atlanta, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Miami, New Orleans, San Diego, Denver, and San Francisco. Additional outlets are in various cities in Colorado, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Tennessee.

The Tap Project was created by advertising agency Droga 5 as part of Esquire magazine's December 2006 "Best & Brightest" issue to raise awareness of a lack of clean drinking water worldwide.

"This is another example of the power of a good idea," said David Granger, editor-in-chief, Esquire. "We were proud to have inspired the Tap Project and have been amazed at how it has captured the country's imagination -- from one day in New York last year to an entire week with nationwide support this year."

More than one billion people do not have access to clean water or adequate sanitation and one in five of them are children. Eighty percent of all illness and infant mortality is due to waterborne disease. Lack of clean water is the second largest killer of children under five.

UNICEF works in more than 90 countries around the world to improve access to safe water and sanitation facilities in schools and communities, and to promote safe hygiene practices. Over the past 15 years, more than a billion people gained access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities. UNICEF's goal is to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water and basic sanitation by 2015. A little goes a long way -- for example, with \$1 UNICEF can provide 40 liters of safe drinking water, which is enough to give one child safe drinking water for 40 days, or forty children safe drinking water for one day.

The Tap Project is made possible, in part, through the support of American Express, Turner Broadcasting, Esquire magazine, opentable.com, and Rotary's Water & Sanitation Rotarian Action Group (WASRAG).

For more information, visit www.tapproject.org

About World Water Day

In December of 1992, the United Nations General Assembly declared March 22nd of each year World Day for Water. Countries were invited to devote the day to concrete activities such as the promotion of public awareness, conferences, round tables, seminars and expositions related to the conservation and development of water resources. The theme for World Water Day 2008 is "Year of Sanitation" and the Tap Project is proud to help. For more information on WWD, see <http://esa.un.org/iys/> and www.un.org/waterforlifedecade.

About UNICEF

For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the world's leading international children's organization, working in over 150 countries to address the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying. UNICEF provides lifesaving nutrition, clean water, education, protection and emergency response saving more young lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. While millions of children die every year of preventable causes like dehydration, upper respiratory infections and measles, UNICEF, with the support of partnering organizations and donors alike, has the global experience, resources and reach to give children the best hope of survival. For more information about UNICEF, please visit www.unicefusa.org.