

## Dr. Ruth A. Etzel named 2007 Children's Environmental Health Champion



(Friday, October 12, 2007)

The 2007 Children's Environmental Health Champion award was presented by the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Children's Health Protection to Ruth A. Etzel, M.D., Ph.D. Dr. Etzel is a pediatrician and environmental epidemiologist. She is the Research Director at Southcentral Foundation, an Alaska Native health organization in Anchorage, Alaska, USA. She is also the Technical Advisor in Children's Environmental Health for the International Pediatric Association (IPA).

Dr. Etzel's work has focused for many years on environmental health threats to children. Twenty-five years ago while she was a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill she initiated studies of passive smoking among children and documented an association between serum cotinine levels and middle ear disease. She co-authored the first study showing the usefulness of cotinine as a biomarker of exposure to secondhand smoke in children. She is the Co-chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence for Children at the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Etzel was an Epidemic Intelligence Officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) where she later founded and directed the Air Pollution and Respiratory Health Branch. She served as Assistant Director of the CDC Preventive Medicine Residency Program from 1992 to 1997. Her international assignments took her to Guatemala to investigate paralytic shellfish poisoning, Sierra Leone to study parathion poisoning, Guyana to investigate thallium poisoning, Kuwait and Uzbekistan to study the health effects of burning oil wells, and Barcelona to investigate epidemics of asthma.

She founded the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Epidemiology and chaired it from 1988 to 1992. She chaired the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Environmental Health from 1995 to 1999. She is the Editor of the AAP manual Pediatric Environmental Health (now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) and serves on the adjunct faculty at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. In addition to being board-certified in Pediatrics, Dr. Etzel is also board-certified in Preventive Medicine and served for 9 years on the American Board of Preventive Medicine. She has received numerous research awards, including the Arthur Flemming Award from the Washington, D.C. Jaycees and the 1998 Clinical Society Award from the US Public Health Service Commissioned Officers Association for her discovery of the association between infant pulmonary hemorrhage and exposure to toxigenic molds.

Most recently, Dr. Etzel founded the IPA's International Pediatric Environmental Health Leadership Institute with funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. This Institute is developing a group of pediatricians with expertise in recognizing, diagnosing, preventing, and managing pediatric diseases linked to environmental factors. They will be the future champions of healthy environments for children.