

Chavez ceremony draws big names



MELANIE BURFORD / SPECIAL TO THE CALIFORNIAN

Sen. Edward Kennedy congratulates Liz Villarino, daughter of Cesar Chavez, during Sen. John McCain's speech at the unveiling of the Chavez stamp in Washington, D.C. Chavez's son, Paul Chavez, stands to the right of Kennedy.

Stamp of honor

Kennedy, McCain help Postal Service salute labor icon

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The late Cesar Chavez was hailed as one of the nation's top labor and civil rights leaders Wednesday as the U.S. Postal Service unveiled a stamp in honor of the co-founder of the United Farm Workers union.

U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., called Chavez "one of the heroic figures of our time" as he presided over the ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Chavez's son, Paul Chavez, said, "My father's teachings of compassion, justice and dignity still ring true almost a decade after his passing."

The 37-cent stamp will be issued April 23, 2003, the 10th anniversary of Chavez's death.

However, the stamp was not universally applauded in Kern County, where Chavez and the union often clashed with farmers.

"I hate to say anything bad about someone who has passed away," said Loron Hodge, manager of the Kern County Farm Bureau. "But we do not consider him the hero that everybody else does."

At the Washington ceremony, the list of dignitaries included Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.; Dolores Huerta of Bakersfield, co-founder of the union;

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