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## **CHILDREN'S MUSEUM FIELD REVEALS A DEEPER SHADE OF GREEN**

— *MetLife Foundation & Association of Children's Museums 2010 Promising Practice Award Competition Underscores Field's Commitment to Environmental Stewardship* —

ARLINGTON, VA — What is your watershed address? Is there ever an excuse not to think locally? Can a city divert all of its solid waste from landfills? Children's museums are working with communities to answer these questions, instilling civic pride and motivating children and families to make environmental stewardship a part of their everyday lives. Illustrating the best of these ongoing efforts are the winners of the 2010 *MetLife Foundation & ACM Promising Practice Awards*, which were announced Thursday, May 6, at the *InterActivity 2010: Invest Early • Inspire Growth* conference in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

"Children's museums model and reinforce the importance of adopting green practices to increase environmental conservation, as well as to improve the health of children, families and communities," said Dennis White, President and CEO of MetLife Foundation.

"In a world where the threat of climate change is pervasive, children's museums provide a place where families can learn through play how to make a difference in their own backyard," said Janet Rice Elman, ACM Executive Director.

Madison Children's Museum (WI), Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose (CA) and The Discovery Museums (Acton, MA) received unrestricted 2010 *Promising Practice Award* grants.

**Madison Children's Museum (MCM)** received a \$7,500 *Promising Practice Award* for its Only Local Initiative. As the 30-year-old institution prepares to move into a new facility in mid-August — anticipated to be the first U.S. Green Building Council LEED-certified museum in the state of Wisconsin — its exhibits, education, development, external relations, visitor services and administration departmental planning is being guided by a strict commitment to go local. All purchases — from printing to construction, to cleaning supplies, to café food, to design services for developing eco-friendly exhibits — are made locally. MCM's pledge extends to lessening the museum's local footprint by promoting public transportation, reducing environmental waste and emphasizing electronic communication. Only Local principles will be transparent in the play and learning experiences for families, and Board strategic planning will continue its local focus.

**Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose (CDM)** accepted a \$7,500 *Promising Practice Award* for its Zero Waste Practices. When the City of San Jose set the ambitious goal of diverting 100 percent of its municipal solid waste from landfills within 15 years, the museum stepped forward as a key partner. The museum has expanded its recycling program, provided compostable service ware, launched a new food waste composting system and educated families about adopting Zero Waste practices. In January 2009, about a year after CDM began its new services, city staff performed a waste audit to gauge program effectiveness. Trash was analyzed and percentages of materials diverted from landfills were calculated; the museum successfully diverted 81 percent of its café waste and 60 percent of the museum's garbage from landfills. Visitor interviews during the audit were also favorable, and the city stakeholders are impressed by the number of families inspired to re-think their waste. Still the museum believes it can do better and is working to increase its efforts institutionally and with the community it serves.

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**The Discovery Museums** received a \$5,000 *Promising Practice Award* for its Water Resource Project, which gets program participants to think about their water resources and what can be done to protect them. Part of its Water Resource Project is a series of 11 hands-on public education programs for families that focus on water resources, quality and environmental protection. To maximize program reach and quality, the museums partner with several local organizations including the U.S. Geological Survey, the Neponset River Watershed Association, the Acton Parent Involvement Program and Nashua River Watershed Association. The Discovery Museums track program attendance, pre- and post-program feedback to assess visitors' general knowledge and participation in multiple events by the same visitors. A solid base of repeat participants has been an especially encouraging result throughout the year. One family engaged in home schooling, for example, has utilized the program continuously as an educational resource.

Additionally, three museums received a *Promising Practice Honorable Mention* and a scholarship to InterActivity 2011, which is scheduled May 19-21, 2011, in Houston, TX.

- Hands On Children's Museum (Olympia, WA) was recognized for its Green Practices at The New Hands On Children's Museum, which is the catalyst for cleaning a 14-acre brown field site and returning it to public use.
- The Children's Museum of Denver (CO) was distinguished for its Green Practices-Environmental Management System, which it recently implemented to track the museum's effectiveness to reduce economic inefficiencies, resource allocation and the overall environmental impact of its operations.
- Children's Museum of Pittsburgh (PA) was acknowledged for its Environmental Practices that communicate sustainability messages to children, families, school groups and educators. Sample programs include Everything Green school field trips, Tot Hikes and a weekly Solar Concert Series, which showcases a solar-powered sound system and sustainable energy activities.

Finally, Port Discovery Children's Museum (Baltimore, MD) accepted the 2010 *Promising Practice Replication Award*, which is open to previous *Promising Practice Award* recipients. Port Discovery will apply its \$10,000 *Replication Award* grant to develop an online toolkit based on its 2009 award-winning PACT & Port Discovery programming. The toolkit will provide other museums with sample components necessary to create similar programs for children with special needs and their caregivers, including partnership suggestions, budget outlines and ways to evaluate program and partnership effectiveness.

**MetLife Foundation** was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation supports programs that improve education, promote health, encourage parental involvement and family engagement, help revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. The Foundation supports museums across the country because of the important role they play in educating people of all ages and the valuable resources they provide for schools and communities.

**Association of Children's Museums** is a professional service organization for children's museums around the world. ACM's mission is to build the capacity of children's museums to serve as town squares where play inspires creativity and lifelong learning. Children's museums welcome more than 31 million visitors annually. More than 15 percent of ACM member institutions have committed themselves to be LEED-certified by the U.S. Green Building Council. Look for summaries of *Promising Practice Award* recipients, toolkit links and information on why children's museums matter at [www.ChildrensMuseums.org](http://www.ChildrensMuseums.org).

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