

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUM CONFERENCE COMES TO HOUSTON
— *Innovation is Child's Play Drives 25th InterActivity Conference* —

ARLINGTON, VA — The global children's museum community will converge on Houston, Texas, for the 25th Association of Children's Museums (ACM) InterActivity conference, May 19-21, 2011, at the Hyatt Regency Houston Hotel. Innovative informal education theory and practice informs all sessions. Participants from the United States, Canada, China, Jordan, Mexico, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and United Kingdom will explore the vital role children's museums have in building children's 21st century skills and in connecting with audiences in new ways.

"Today's children are growing up in a worldwide community that no longer embraces knowledge or skill sets as an end game," says Janet Rice Elman, ACM executive director. "Children's museums provide an interactive environment where kids can experiment with scientific, cultural and artistic concepts that transform abstract ideas into something real."

Hosted locally by the Children's Museum of Houston (CMH) and reflective of its leading role within the museum field, the InterActivity conference features science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) teaching strategies, tactics for extending exhibit inquiry via mobile devices and thoughts on promoting risk as a necessary experience for personal and institutional growth.

Members of the media are welcome to attend plenary sessions and should contact ACM or CMH for a conference media pass.

Questions Addressed at Plenary Sessions

- **Are epiphanies overrated?** Steven Berlin Johnson, author of *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, will open the conference with a keynote address about eureka moments and the impact science, technology and media have on modern life. [Thurs, May 19, 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.]
- **Should schools teach basketball from a textbook?** Milton Chen, Ph.D., executive director, emeritus, of The George Lucas Educational Foundation will talk about recalibrating our education system and provide insight from his groundbreaking book *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in Our Schools*. [Fri, May 20, 9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.]
- **How does a 50-year-old legacy appeal to the next generation?** Lisa Henson, CEO of The Jim Henson Company, will reveal how the Henson entertainment empire continues to create lovable characters and engaging storylines for today's children by embracing new technology. During the plenary, Ms. Henson will accept ACM's 2011 Great Friend to Kids Award on behalf of the family-owned company in recognition of its longtime commitment to producing innovative, family programming that creatively addresses a range of topics and issues with compassion, humor and whimsy. [Sat, May 21, 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.]

Pre-Conference and Conference Highlights

- Prior to InterActivity, events include an Emerging Museum Pre-Conference on the process of opening a new children's museum; a nanotechnology workshop presented by members of NISE Net with support from the National Science Foundation; a cognitive science workshop on how to innovate exhibits using brain research; and a Boot Stompin' Pecha Kucha at The Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park, where museum directors,

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- designers and developers will engage in a fast-paced presentation on creativity and its many sources of inspiration. [Wed, May 18, 8:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m., see Final Program for specific event schedules.]
- At the 2011 MetLife Foundation and ACM Promising Practice Award ceremony, a total of \$25,000 will be presented to children's museums with exemplary programs that prepare children to become global citizens. An additional museum will receive \$10,000 to develop an online toolkit so other museums can replicate its previously awarded promising practice. [Thurs, May 19, 9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.]
- More than 60 exhibitors — from museum architecture and exhibit design firms to museum product manufacturers — will present creative, playful and cutting-edge ideas for children's museums in the ACM MarketPlace. [Fri, May 20, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.]

More than five dozen sessions, five salon discussions and multiple study tours and workshops are fully described in the InterActivity 2011 Final Program, available in PDF form at www.ChildrensMuseums.org.

InterActivity 2011: *Innovation is Child's Play* is supported by major gifts from the Children's Museum of Houston and its board of directors, John P. McGovern Foundation, Sylvan/Laureate Foundation, Houston Endowment — a philanthropy endowed by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones — and The Brown Foundation. InterActivity is funded in part by a grant from the City of Houston Mayor's Special Initiative Program through the Houston Arts Alliance and the Houston Museum District Association. General conference support is provided by The Tapeats Fund and The Joe Barnhart Foundation. The following organizations are sponsors of InterActivity: Heartland Scenic Studio, Boss Display Corporation, Argyle Design, Inc., Jack Rouse Associates, Lexington Design + Fabrication, RedBox Workshop, Blackbaud, NorthStar Museums, The Nassal Company, Science Museum of Minnesota, MindSplash, Schipul: The Web Marketing Company, Dinosaurs Unearthed, Imagination Playground and Roto Studio.

About the InterActivity 2011 Museum Host

America's No. 1 Children's Museum" by *Parents Magazine*, winner of Nickelodeon Parents' Picks "Best Museum in Houston 2009 & 2010," Click2Houston's "Best Museum 2010," the Children's Museum of Houston is a Citysearch.com's nationwide 5-star children's museum. Founded in 1980 and housed in a whimsical building designed by internationally acclaimed architect Robert Venturi, the Children's Museum of Houston offers a multitude of innovative exhibits and bilingual learning programs bursting with action-packed fun. The Museum serves more than 1,100,000 people annually. It is dedicated to transforming communities through innovative, child-centered learning with a vision to spark a passion for lifelong learning! Can your mind come out to play?™ Visit www.cmHouston.org for more information.

About Association of Children's Museums

The Association of Children's Museums provides leadership, professional development and resources for its member organizations and individuals. Celebrating 25 years of InterActivity, ACM welcomed nearly 120 attendees to its first conference, InterActivity 1987, in San Francisco, California. ACM projects nearly 800 participants at InterActivity 2011. The growth of the conference mirrors that of the field, which has increased exponentially since the first children's museum, Brooklyn Children's Museum (NY), opened in 1899. There are approximately 400 children's museums around the world. Children's museums annually reach more than 31 million children and families. For more than 112 years, children's museums have helped innovate and redefine the traditional museum world by creating places where all kids can learn through play with the caring adults in their lives. For links to ACM's international list of museums and more information about InterActivity 2011, visit www.ChildrensMuseums.org.

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