

MEDIA RELEASE

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ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS AWARDED \$220,000 GRANT FOR "GROWING HEALTHY MUSEUMS" PROJECT

— *Grant Will Help Fund National Leadership Initiative to Address
Childhood Overweight and Obesity Epidemic* —

Washington, DC — Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has awarded the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) a \$220,000 grant to launch a "Growing Healthy Museums" project to increase children's museums' institutional capacity, knowledge and skills as leaders in promoting health and wellness in their communities. ACM was one of ten organizations recognized in 2007 under the 21st Century Museum Professionals program from IMLS, the primary source of federal funds for the nation's museums and libraries. The program supports leadership development and professional training in museum operations. Institutions receiving these grants will match the awards with non-federal spending.

"ACM is honored to have IMLS invest in capacity-building for children's museum professionals as they create public value for the communities they serve," says Janet Rice Elman, ACM executive director. "The 'Growing Healthy Museums' project will benefit more than 300 children's museums that in turn have the potential to engage millions of children and families in making healthy choices."

Growing Healthy Museums is a fundamental component of *Good to Grow!*, a core ACM initiative begun in 2005 aimed to improve the health and wellness of families through programs, exhibits, partnerships, training, publications, public policy and evaluation.

Currently there are no field-wide standards to support museums in their efforts to become healthy institutions, no existing clearinghouse for best practices, limited opportunities for museum professionals to learn from one another about this topic and few applicable tools for children's museums to use. Growing Healthy Museums will specifically help museum leaders, educators, exhibit developers, and program managers to address the childhood obesity in their communities. Funding will support three major activities: an institutional self-study and recognition program to help children's museums infuse healthy practices throughout their operations; a Healthy Museums publication of effective health-related programs and best practices; and a conference and resource materials focused on building healthy community partnerships.

The first activity, Building Healthy Community Partnerships Post-Conference, will roll out following ACM's annual conference InterActivity 2008 (April 24-26, 2008). The post-conference will enhance the professional skills of staff from a range of children's and other museums by providing practical strategies, inspiring models and tools. It is widely recognized that some of the most effective solutions to the childhood obesity epidemic are those that take a community approach. Content for the workshop will be developed by ACM and may focus on issues such as creating quantifiable outcome measures for a partnership's impact and strategies for developing and maintaining strong partnerships.

The program will also serve as a collection point for vital elements of a partnership-building toolkit, including templates for solidifying a partnership, curriculum materials and evaluation tools. Project evaluators will work with ACM to guide production of the toolkit, based on observation of the post-conference and follow-up interviews with participants on which materials would be most useful in crafting successful partnerships. Four museums, selected by ACM via an RFP process, will then prototype the toolkit in their communities. The resulting Community Engagement Toolkit will be introduced a year later at InterActivity 2009, and a Web-based toolkit will be made available to ACM members free of charge via the *Good to Grow!* Web site.

Additional key Growing Healthy Museum activities — a Healthy Museum publication and an Institutional Self-Study and Recognition Program — will also be unveiled at InterActivity 2009.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.ims.gov.

About the Association of Children's Museums

ACM 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 for children and families where play inspires creativity and lifelong learning. ACM has 515 members, of which nearly 300 are children's museums based in the United States and abroad. For more than 100 years, children's museums have stimulated curiosity and motivated learning in young children. The museums complement efforts in schools, childcare centers and homes, enriching the lives and education of children. Children's museums annually reach more than 30 million children and families. Visit www.ChildrensMuseums.org for links to ACM's international list of museums and tips on making the most of the children's museum experience and www.GoodToGrow.org for ideas on how to grow healthy kids at children's museums and at home.