

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS RECOGNIZED FOR SUPPORTING HEALTHY KIDS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES**

— *Ninth Annual MetLife Foundation and Association of Children's Museums Promising Practice Awards Announced at InterActivity 2007* —

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Good physical and emotional health is crucial to learning and growth from birth to adulthood. Healthy attitudes and habits start at home, but families face significant barriers to making good choices. Children's museums have the ability to bring attention to issues related to child development and to convene important discussions among community-based organizations, media partners and policy makers. In recognition of these efforts, MetLife Foundation and Association of Children's Museums (ACM) gave their 2007 *Promising Practice Awards* to four children's museums on May 10, 2007, at ACM's annual InterActivity conference held in Chicago.

A total of \$30,000 was distributed to the award-winning museums in honor of their exhibits, programs and management practices that support healthy kids and families, especial those living in low-income communities.

"Children's Museums are a practical and strategic partner for communities looking to promote fitness and healthy eating. Side by side, child and caregiver can exercise their curiosity and teach themselves how everyday choices can have a healthy impact for tomorrow," said Sibyl Jacobson, President of MetLife Foundation.

"Why should transportation, language, or an accessible venue stop families in low-income communities from learning about physical activity, good nutrition and positive emotional development? Children's museums remove these barriers so that all families can join in for a playful learning experience," said Janet Rice Elman, ACM executive director.

Three 2007 *Promising Practice Award* winners received unrestricted grants.

Children's Museum of Skagit County (Mount Vernon, WA) received a \$5,000 *Promising Practice Award* for its outreach to low-income families. In working with different cultural groups in its region, as well community agencies, Children's Museum of Skagit County recognized that a model of "if we build it, they will come" does not always work. Therefore, this museum goes out in the community, arranges transportation to the museum for field trips and special events on a variety of health topics. Community Free Days are promoted widely and scheduled regularly for families. Through signage and interpretation services in multiple languages, the museum is able to serve a more diverse group of families.

Stepping Stones Museum for Children (Norwalk, CT) received a \$7,500 *Promising Practice Award* for its children's health initiative. Key project components include: a series of eight health vignettes broadcast on Connecticut Public Television during children's programming; statewide community outreach including travel kiosks and travel kits; health educational programs designed to reach schools and groups, afterschool programs, families, educators and community organizations; and a fifteen-hundred square-foot traveling exhibit of multi-sensory games and problem-solving activities called "Healthyville."

The Children's Museum of Houston (TX) was presented with a \$7,500 *Promising Practice Award* for its Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies program. Designed not as a stand-alone program, Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies is integrated with long-standing and familiar programs at 30 elementary schools and at 20 branches of the city public library system and the museum. By presenting new material in settings

where low-income families already visit and trust, the barriers to reach these families are reduced. Three separate evaluations of the Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies program conducted by university and public sector researchers have indicated 100 percent satisfaction among Spanish-speaking audiences and school administrators.

Finally, Minnesota Children's Museum (St. Paul) was awarded the 2007 *Promising Practice Replication Award*. The *Replication Award* is open to previous *Promising Practice Award* recipients and provides the winner a \$10,000 grant to develop a tool kit to further share the award-winning practice with the children's museum field. Minnesota Children's Museum's Wakanheza initiative was first recognized in 2006 with a *Promising Practice Award*. (Wakanheza is the Dakota word for "child" and the closest English translation is "sacred being.") By providing remarkably simple yet powerful responses to two common questions — When I see a parent and child struggling in public, what can I do to step in and improve the situation? And, is there something I can do to prevent these difficult situations in the first place? — the Wakanheza initiative seeks to improve the treatment of children, youth and families.

In addition to the winners named above, three museums received honorable mentions and will receive a registration scholarship to InterActivity 2008 in Denver.

- Madison Children's Museum (WI) for its fundraising policy, which states that the museum will seek corporate sponsors whose projects or services are consistent with what the museum values — respect for all children, community connections, sustainability and play as the natural way to learn.
- The Discovery Center at Murfree Spring (Murfreesboro, TN) for its four-month, family-focused nutrition and exercise program called "Discovering Healthy Families," which is run in partnership with Middle Tennessee State University, StoneCrest Medical Center and the local American Heart Association.
- And Amazement Square, The Rightmire Children's Museum (Lynchburg, VA) for its "Healthy Heads, Hands and Hearts" program that is carried out through a unique educational cartoon series published daily in the local newspaper and through series of in-house and outreach programs. The program brings attention to the importance of nutrition and physical activity and the negative impact of drug abuse.

The *MetLife Foundation and Association of Children's Museums Promising Practice Award* was established in 1999, and provides recognition and inspiration for children's museums to develop programs that are inclusive, meet community needs, encourage community partnerships and promote lifelong learning. The *Promising Practice Award* competition is open to nonprofit children's museums in the United States that are voting members of ACM. The *Promising Practice Replication Award* was launched in 2004. An impartial committee of museum professionals and health experts judged the award competitions. Summaries of all the *Promising Practice* applications will be posted on the ACM Web site by June 15, 2007.

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.

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](http://www.ChildrensMuseums.org) for links to ACM's international list of museums and tips on making the most of the children's museum experience.

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