

NEWS RELEASE

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CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS AWARDED NATIONAL 2005 METLIFE FOUNDATION AND ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS PROMISING PRACTICE AWARDS — Museums Lauded for Honoring Diversity and Supporting Inclusion —

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Four children's museums received top honors for their pioneering efforts to support diversity and inclusion and a total of \$30,000 from the *2005 MetLife Foundation and Association of Children's Museums Promising Practice Award* competitions. The awards honor innovative management and programming practices in children's museums, with diversity and inclusion chosen as the theme for the 2005 awards. The Association of Children's Museums' (ACM) presented the awards at its annual conference InterActivity held in Indianapolis, Indiana, on April 28-30.

"By offering opportunities for individuals to play and learn enthusiastically regardless of a person's ability, children's museums model and facilitate an inclusive and tolerant community for children and adults." said Janet Rice Elman, executive director of ACM.

Each of the three *2005 Promising Practice Award* winners received unrestricted grants.

- Young At Art Children's Museum (Davie, Fla.) won \$7,500 for its *ArtREACH* program. The program is a partnership among the museum, the local school district and Salvation Army that reaches out to homeless children. Inside the largest family shelter in the South Florida region, apartments have been transformed into vibrant after-school centers, providing art and computer activities, homework assistance, behavior therapy and parent/child programs. Through *ArtREACH* homeless children and their parents benefit from a creative, safe atmosphere and a stable after-school option.
- Chicago Children's Museum was awarded \$7,500 for its three-year *Institutional Plan* for diversity. Initiated by the Chicago Children's Museum staff and board in 2002, and funded with a grant from the Joyce Foundation, the plan addresses how the museum will improve its diversity performance in all areas of its operations: exhibits, programming, community connections, marketing, human capital and research. Embedded in Chicago's *Institutional Plan*, the museum has set challenging, yet realistic goals and measurable objectives for the promotion of diversity in all areas.
- Virginia Discovery Museum (Charlottesville, Va.) won \$5,000 for its strategies to recruit and retain museum volunteers with disabilities. From a former military medic who endured severe head trauma from her time serving in Iraq, to a bright young musician who is legally blind, to a person using a wheelchair, these and other volunteers provide capable and valuable service that provides a positive and productive experience for visitors and the volunteers.

The final award winner, Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum®, received the *2005 Promising Practice Replication Award* for its *Achievement through Community Service, Education and Skill Building (ACES)* program. 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.

ACES is a work-based learning, enrichment and mentoring program for at-risk youth. Many of the high school students who go through the ACES program successfully transition from school to higher

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education and meaningful employment. Beginning in 2004, the museum included three students with special needs as participants in the ACES program. By diversifying its program and including additional students with special needs, the museum also expanded its school partnerships to include a new school that works specifically with children with disabilities. Please Touch Museum® won a *Promising Practice Award* for ACES in 2004.

ACM received 41 applications for the 2005 *Promising Practice Awards* competitions. In addition to the winners named above, three museums received honorable mentions for their programs and practices: Betty Brinn Children's Museum for its *Fathers and Families* program, The Children's Museum of Houston for its *Project ACCELERATE* and Brooklyn Children's Museum for its *Unified Community* initiative. Each of the three museums will receive a registration scholarship to InterActivity 2006, scheduled April 24-26, 2006 in Boston.

Summaries of all the applications will be posted on the ACM Web site by June 1, 2005.

Established in 1999, the *Promising Practice Award* 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. An impartial committee of museum professionals judges the award competitions. The *Promising Practice Replication Award* was launched in 2004.

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. MetLife Foundation stresses education in all its programs. 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 where play inspires creativity and lifelong learning. Founded in 1962 as a support group for directors of children's museums in the United States, ACM has broadened its services and purpose as an international association. Currently, ACM has 466 members, of which more than 280 are children's museums based in the United States and abroad. For more than 100 years, children's museums have succeeded in their mission of stimulating curiosity and motivating learning in young children. The museums complement efforts in schools, childcare centers, and homes, enriching the lives and education of children and families. Currently, children's museums represent the fastest growing cultural institution in the United States. Over the last fifteen years, the number of children's museums in the United States has grown by 100 percent, reaching more than 30 million children and families in 2004. .

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