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PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM HOSTS NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS EXHIBIT JAN. 22-APRIL 24, 2011

PHILADELPHIA, PA – An interactive, yet sensitive disability awareness exhibit that delivers the message to children, parents and educators that as human beings, we are more alike than different, travels to Philadelphia on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2011.

Access/ABILITY, a national traveling exhibit designed for children ages 5-12 and their families, will be at Please Touch Museum through April 24, 2011. This 1,200-square-foot exhibit, developed by Boston Children's Museum, presents people living with disabilities participating in everyday activities and settings that are familiar to children. The exhibit features fun and engaging activities that show the similarities and differences in how each of us, with or without disabilities, goes places, communicates, has fun, and learns. Visitors will have a chance to learn phrases in American Sign Language, type their names in Braille, try a hand-pedaled bike and take part in a multi-sensory City Walk. Check out the "My Way" kiosks to meet individuals living with disabilities who talk about themselves, their accomplishments, and how they overcome challenges in their lives.

"This important exhibit aims to change attitudes, dispel myths, fears and stereotypes, and increase awareness of people living with disabilities by acknowledging differences, while highlighting similarities," said Laura Foster, President & CEO of Please Touch Museum. "*Access/ABILITY* provides an arena in which children can safely ask questions and receive open and honest answers about what it's like to live with a physical or learning disability. Museum staff will treat questions as 'teaching moments' and will provide a supportive atmosphere for asking questions and expressing curiosity."

In addition to being stroller and wheelchair accessible, the exhibit is accessible to visitors who are visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired. The exhibit is organized into six areas:

- **Going Places:** Visitors can explore a wheelchair obstacle course and a multi-sensory City Walk.
- **Talk with Me:** Visitors learn phrases in American Sign Language, type their names in Braille and communicate using pictures.

- **Just for Fun:** Try a hand-pedaled bike and create art using sight, touch and sound.
- **Think about It:** Visitors test their attention and memory skills.
- **Invent It:** Experience design challenges, discover multiple ways to accomplish tasks and learn how things can be designed to work for the largest number of people.
- **Resource Area:** Visitors can learn more through books and online resources.

Additional Programming and Training

Visual and performing arts programming throughout Please Touch Museum will be enhanced to support *Access/ABILITY*. Programming enhancements will include performers of varying abilities, special activities in the museum's Program Room and Story Castle, and the unveiling of a new puppet related to the exhibit.

Access/ABILITY is open daily from Jan. 22-April 24, 2011 and is free with regular museum admission (\$15 for visitors ages 1 and older). The exhibit was created by Boston Children's Museum and is sponsored nationally by MetLife Foundation. The exhibit is sponsored in Philadelphia by the Widener Memorial Foundation in Aid of Handicapped Children. The foundation supports research into the causes, treatment, and prevention of diseases and conditions which handicap children orthopedically; and provides support to aid and assist public and private charitable institutions and associations in the care, education, and rehabilitation of children so handicapped.

Local partner Inglis Foundation will provide consultation, staff training and volunteers during *Access/ABILITY* at Please Touch Museum to ensure that museum staff models and encourages appropriate, positive behavior and etiquette for visitors. Inglis Foundation is also helping the museum update its Explore-Ability kit, which will go "on the road" to advertise *Access/ABILITY* and introduce children to tools that heighten their awareness and understanding of all types of disabilities.

Based in Philadelphia, Inglis Foundation (www.inglis.org) enables people with disabilities – and those who care for them – to achieve their goals and live life to the fullest.

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Please Touch Museum® at Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park is dedicated to enriching the lives of children by providing learning opportunities through play. Recognized locally and nationally as one of the best children's museums, Please Touch is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m. -5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-581-3181, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.

About Boston Children's Museum

Boston Children's Museum exists to help children understand and enjoy the world in which they live. It is a private, non-profit, educational institution that is recognized internationally as a research and development center and pacesetter for children's exhibitions, educational programs and curriculum. Boston Children's Museum incorporates two strategies – engaging families and building communities – to impact five outcome areas for children: Creative Kids, Curious Kids, Global Kids, Green Kids and Healthy Kids. More information about Boston Children's Museum can be found at www.BostonChildrensMuseum.org.

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants are made to support health, educational, civic and cultural organizations and programs. The Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people. For more information, please visit www.metlife.org.