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PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM® TO PARTICIPATE IN BLUE STAR MUSEUMS

Please Touch is one of more than 600 museums to offer free admission to military personnel and their families this summer

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Please Touch Museum, the Children’s Museum of Philadelphia, today announced the launch of Blue Star Museums, a partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, and more than 600 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2010. Families can visit www.pleasetouchmuseum.org for museum hours. The complete list of participating Blue Star Museums is available at www.arts.gov.

“Please Touch Museum is honored to be able to thank our nation’s military personnel and their families by offering free museum admission this summer,” said Laura Foster, President & CEO of Please Touch Museum. “We thank the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families for their leadership in creating this program, which will provide families some invaluable time to play and learn together in the midst of some often difficult times apart.”

“America’s museums are proud to join the rest of the country in thanking our military personnel and their families for their service and sacrifice,” said National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman. “I cannot imagine a better way to do that than welcoming them in to explore and enjoy the extraordinary cultural heritage our museums present. The works of art on view this summer will inspire and challenge viewers, and sometimes they will just be a great deal of fun.”

“There have always been wonderful examples of partnerships between museums and military installations, but the scale of this gift from the museum communities to military families is thrilling,” said Blue Star Families Chairman Kathy Roth-Douquet. “Military families work hard for this country, and it is gratifying for us to be recognized for that. We anticipate that thousands of military families will participate in the program and visit museums this summer – many of them for the first time. Blue Star Families will work hard to help our military families make the most of these opportunities.”

In addition to being Chairman of Blue Star Families, Ms. Roth-Douquet is married to a Marine Corps officer, who is currently deployed to Afghanistan. They have two children, and Ms. Roth-Douquet and the children plan to take a road trip this summer to visit Blue Star Museums up and down the East Coast.

More than 600 museums in all 50 states and the District of Columbia are taking part in the initiative. The American Association of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors, and the Association of Children’s Museums each sent a letter from NEA Chairman Landesman inviting museums to participate in this program. In addition to thirty children’s museums across the country, participating museums represent a broad range of art, history, science, and cultural topics -- from the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, to the California Surf Museum in Oceanside, California, to the Mission San Luis, a living history site and historic landmark in Tallahassee, Florida, to the International Quilt Study Center & Museum at the University of Lincoln – Nebraska, the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, and the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, New Hampshire.

Blue Star Museums runs from Memorial Day, May 31 through to Labor Day, September 6, 2010. The free admission program is available to active duty military and their immediate family members (military ID holder and five immediate family members), which includes active duty Reserve and active duty National Guard. Some special or limited-time museum exhibits may not be included in this free admission program. For questions on particular exhibits or museums, please contact the museum directly. To find out which museums are participating, visit www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums. The site includes a list of participating museums and a map to help with visit planning.

Museums that wish to participate in Blue Star Museums may contact bluestarmuseums@arts.gov, or Nicole Murray at 202-682-5578.

This is the latest Arts Endowment program to bring quality arts programs to the military, veterans, and their families. Other NEA programs for the military have included Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience, Great American Voices Military Base Tour, and Shakespeare in American Communities Military Base Tour.

About Blue Star Families

Blue Star Families is a national, non-partisan, non-profit network of military families from all ranks and services including guard and reserve, with a mission to support, connect and empower military families. In addition to morale and empowerment programs, Blue Star Families raises awareness of the challenges and strengths of military family life with civilian community and leaders. Membership includes spouses, kids, parents, service members, veterans and civilians.

Operation Appreciation is an initiative of Blue Star Families that seeks to connect military families to the larger community. Blue Star Families 2009 annual survey shows that 94 percent of military families feel that the larger community doesn't truly understand or appreciate the sacrifices we make for the country. Through initiatives such as Blue Star Museums, Blue Star Families provides avenues for the larger community to show that they do understand, in meaningful ways that enrich the lives of military service members, spouses, children and parents. For more information, please visit www.BlueStarFam.org.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The NEA is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit www.arts.gov.

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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.