

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ARE YOU READY TO PLAY? PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM AT MEMORIAL HALL OPENS ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Please Touch Museum caps a 32-year growth spurt and an \$88 million restoration of a National Historic Landmark when it opens its newly renovated and expanded museum at Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park on Saturday, October 18, 2008. The new museum, housed in the last major building remaining from the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, offers a huge array of interactive, hands-on learning opportunities for little ones and their families. New exhibits, some old favorites, a collection of Philadelphia Childhood Treasures and a century-old Dentzel Carousel join together with Memorial Hall's rich history and architecture to create a unique family destination that resembles a majestic storybook castle.

Six New Exhibits

Roadside Attractions takes off with the theme of transportation. Kids can work on an engine puzzle under the hood of a car, "inflate" the tires and "fill up" the gas tank of a real, full-sized automobile, or design their own fantasy car. A visit isn't complete without a ride on the much-loved *SEPTA Bus*, a classic of Please Touch Museum.

Flight Fantasy blasts kids into outer space. Using their own body's energy, children can pedal a propeller bike that powers a track of 'flying' toys, play hopscotch on clouds, and learn about aerodynamics by creating and launching flying machines of their own design.

City Capers offers a realistic urban environment with buildings from Philadelphia's skyline, a shoe store and medical center, and other 'neighborhood' activities. The beloved *Supermarket* is back with shopping carts and food packages for kids to stock up on their favorite groceries or check out customers by tapping on ringing cash registers.

Wonderland brings families into the land of their imaginations with a magical trip down the rabbit hole. Weave through a circular maze and find your way out of the *Hall of Doors and Mirrors*. Sit down for a cup of tea with the Mad Hatter, play croquet with the Queen of Hearts, or join the Dodo for a wild caucus race.

River Adventures has a huge new water play table where kids can create river currents, build and race boats and steer them safely into harbor. A lighthouse gives kids a chance to light up a beacon under interactive storm clouds that children activate themselves. In the *Rainforest Rhythm* area, children create music with nature-inspired instruments.

Centennial Exploration is the place where history comes alive as visitors step inside Please Touch Museum's bustling 1876 train station. The Centennial Exhibition of 1876 was the first major world's fair to be held in the United States, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Nearly 10 million people visited the Centennial from May 10 to November 10, 1876, a staggering feat of cultural tourism when one considers the U.S. population totaled just 40 million at the time. This exhibit celebrates an often forgotten piece of Philadelphia history. Visitors can view the Centennial Fairgrounds Model built in 1889, depicting the 200 buildings erected for the World's Fair. Kids can dress up in clothes from the era and play with the "inventions" (like the telephone and typewriter) unveiled in 1876.

A Monument to Play

As part of the restoration and expansion of Memorial Hall, Please Touch has created a huge 'monument to play.' As visitors enter the Great Hall, they encounter a life-sized, 40-foot replica of the Statue of Liberty's Arm and Torch created out of toys, games and other 'found objects'—wood, plastic and metal—gathered and assembled by

Philadelphia artist Leo Sewell. The subject matter holds a special place in Memorial Hall's history: The original Statue of Liberty Arm and Torch was displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition as part of a fundraising effort. Classic toys like a Sit 'N' Spin and Barbie are joined by Santa Claus, action figures, license plates bearing the logos of Philly pro sports teams, skis, board games, and Philly's favorite fighter, Rocky Balboa. The sculpture also contains remnants found inside Memorial Hall, including a "No Diving" sign rescued from the swimming pool once housed in the East Gallery.

A Restored 100-year-old Carousel

Housed inside a 9,000-square-foot addition is the fully restored *Woodside Park Dentzel Carousel*, which originally operated at a Philadelphia amusement park less than 10 blocks from Memorial Hall. The animal menagerie, which dates back to 1908, includes 40 horses, four cats, two pigs, two goats and four rabbits. It is illuminated by 1,296 light bulbs. It had been in storage for more than 40 years and was once in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. The carousel is on long-term loan from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

A Collection of Philadelphia Childhood Treasures

The collection of more than 12,500 toys and games from 1945 to the present, is prominently displayed throughout the museum and offers families the opportunity for intergenerational learning and sharing of childhood memories. The museum also collects major pieces which reflect the history of childhood in Philadelphia. One such item is the Rocket Express, a kid-sized monorail that carried children above the 8th floor toy department at the famed local John Wanamaker's department store from 1946 to 1984. Another is the set, costumes and video archive of the children's TV show *Captain Noah and his Magical Ark*, which aired from 1967-1994. During the holidays, the museum displays the remaining 10 scenes of the *Enchanted Colonial Village*, which was displayed at Lit Brothers' department store on Market Street, from 1962 to 1975. They include a toymaker, clockmaker, baker, blacksmith, tailor shop, general store, schoolhouse and a family enjoying their holiday dinner.

About Please Touch Museum

Please Touch Museum, the Children's Museum of Philadelphia, was founded in 1976 as a 2,200 square foot exhibit inside Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences. The nation's first museum dedicated to children seven and younger was an experiment that would grow, and grow, through two moves and one expansion. The museum's child-directed form of play fosters curiosity, stimulates imagination, encourages exploration and promotes a lifelong love of learning. Kids also learn relationship-building, cooperation, negotiation and compromise. Memorial Hall, which served as the first home to the Philadelphia Museum of Art until 1928, is 70 times larger than the first Please Touch Museum. After 80 years, the National Historic Landmark is returning to its original purpose, a museum.

Visit our online media kit at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org for more information and downloadable, high-resolution photographs.

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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. The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and children age one and over. Museum members and children under one are free. On-site parking is available. For more information, call 215-581-3181, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.