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**PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM HOSTS HANDS-ON EXHIBIT
EXPLORING TRADITIONS AND CULTURE OF VIET NAM**

Dragons & Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales debuts June 23

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Families visiting Please Touch Museum this summer will enter a magical place where aspects of modern day life in Viet Nam are interwoven with the presentation of centuries-old fables in *Dragons & Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales*. The nationally traveling exhibit will be in Philadelphia from June 23-September 9, 2007, providing a wealth of hands-on, interactive learning about the daily experiences and culture of the Vietnamese people.

Dragons & Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales is presented by the Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative, administered by the Association of Children's Museums and created by The Children's Museum of Houston. It is one of seven traveling exhibits in the Initiative designed to promote a better understanding of Asian cultures. These exhibits will visit a total of 77 children's museums from 2004-2008; *Dragons & Fairies* will travel to 10 of those museums.

In Philadelphia, the exhibit will be accompanied by the Please Touch Playhouse premiere of *From the Sea to the Sky*, an original interpretation of traditional Vietnamese folk tales adapted for young audiences by Alice Gonglewski, the museum's assistant theater manager. The show will feature traditional Vietnamese clothing as well as wooden and bamboo masks, and sequences inspired by the traditional Vietnamese art of water puppetry, using modern puppets instead of water.

Daily programs in the museum's Kids Creations gallery will enhance the exhibit experience, as families take part in activities that celebrate ancestry (make a family tree), explore art from other countries (painting to Vietnamese music), and encourage imagination. Visitors will also discover the meanings of various Vietnamese names and choose one for themselves based on the attributes they possess. They can find out about their personalities according to the year they were born while creating Zodiac Rubbings using replicas of traditional Vietnamese wood blocks.

The exhibit flows through five "folktale theatres," partially enclosed structures where families view multi-media presentations of popular folktales that highlight the values and traditions of the Vietnamese people. The exhibit is fully bilingual, with English and Vietnamese text and audio. Each of these folktales draws on centuries-old stories that define the origins, geography and celebrations of Viet Nam. They include:

The Story of 100 Eggs: A creation tale about King Lac Long Quan, a descendant of dragons, who marries the fairy Au Co. Their sons are the ancestors of the Viet Nam people. This legend forms the central theme of the exhibit.

An Tiem and the Watermelons: The story about a hard-working orphan who prospers after being tested by the king who adopted him.

The Story of the Betel and Areca Nut: This story explains why betel leaves, areca nuts and limestone are traditionally presented to a bridegroom's family.

The Legend of Chu Cuoi: The celebrated tale of a young man who accidentally discovers a tree

possessing magical healing powers.

The Legend of the Rice Cakes: This story describes a contest in which a young prince named Tiet Lieu and his wife please the Emperor Hung Vuong by creating two types of rice cake: a round one symbolizing Heaven and a square one symbolizing Earth.

The facades of the theatres will form three distinct regions. In one, visitors explore what life is like in rural areas of Viet Nam. In another, visitors experience the “streets” of a city and take part in preparations for Tet Trung Thu – the Mid-Autumn Lantern Festival. In a third, visitors may enter a houseboat and house like those found in Viet Nam’s urban and riverside regions and take part in preparations for Tet Nguyen Dan - the Lunar New Year Festival. Visitors will engage in hands-on activities that further bring the Vietnamese culture to life.

Additional activities will also prompt children to explore the traits that they share with Vietnamese children and those that might be unique. They include trying on masks and traditional clothing, performing a Dragon dance and playing traditional games. Kids will also work alongside their parents on a houseboat and afterwards, build an altar to honor one of their ancestors - all activities encouraging visitors to recognize that closeness of the family is of utmost importance in Vietnamese culture.

The Freeman Foundation

The Freeman Foundation is a private grant-making foundation based in Vermont. It was established in 1992 to support greater understanding between Asia and the United States.

The Association of Children’s Museums (ACM)

ACM is the professional service organization that endeavors to expand the capacity and further the vision of children’s museums around the world. ACM’s vision is to bring children and families together in a new kind of Town Square where play inspires lifelong learning. Founded in 1962 as a support group for directors, ACM has broadened its services and purpose as an international association with over 400 members.

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Please Touch Museum® 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 seven days a week from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$9.95 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-963-0667, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.

Please Touch Museum has embarked on an ambitious restoration and renovation of its future home at Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park. Built for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition and original home to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Memorial Hall will provide a truly unique children’s museum with 36,000 square feet of exhibit space (more than triple the current 11,000), new exhibits, and a restored 1924 Dentzel Carousel that originally operated at Woodside Park—a favorite Philadelphia amusement park located less than 10 blocks from Memorial Hall—until 1955. Please Touch Museum at Memorial Hall is scheduled to open in the fall of 2008.