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Please Touch Museum Embraces New Mission, Promise; Announces New Strategic Plan and Additions to the Board of Trustees

New institutional vision focuses on the Museum’s commitment to empowering the early childhood learning critical for success in the 21st century.

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Today Please Touch Museum introduced a new strategic plan and vision for the beloved Philadelphia institution that will guide its philosophy, operations, and overall institutional direction for the coming years. Centered around a newly emboldened mission and promise, Please Touch Museum 2020: Reimagining Play to Empower 21st Century Learners refocuses the Museum’s vision and sets the course for its future as a leading engine of and advocate for the learning through play that is critical for early childhood development.

In 2016, while the Museum welcomed more than 490,000 visitors, provided free or deeply discounted admission to more than 65,000 children and families in need, hosted over 16,000 Philadelphia schoolchildren free of admission charge, and provided support for more Art-Reach ACCESS cardholders this year than all other participating organizations combined, the organization simultaneously took on the task of reimagining a strategic vision that would lay the path to do more.

“We are in a decidedly critical time for the future of our children, and children’s museums are rising to meet an ever-growing need to support and provide early learning that builds a foundation for success in the 21st century,” said Please Touch Museum President & CEO Patricia D. (Trish) Wellenbach. “Driven by our new mission and promise, Please Touch Museum will answer that call.”

The result is both inspirational and aspirational:
The new mission: Change a child’s life as they discover the power of learning through play.

The promise: To be a leader in 21st century children’s museums as a key resource of learning through play, and expand our reach and impact in the Philadelphia region and beyond.

Framed by the new mission and promise, Please Touch Museum 2020 includes a series of guiding principles that will direct Please Touch Museum’s work in the coming years, as well as strategy points
and goals that will enhance every department within the organization. The Museum is committed to reimagining the ways that its play-based experiences empower learning through connecting exhibits and programming in innovative ways that center around contemporary skill-building and understanding, and bolstering the capacity for excellence and sustainability across all facets of the institution, from staff to the Board of Trustees.

This work has already begun. The Museum opened a new permanent exhibit that recreates the iconic Bassetts Ice Cream stand in November 2016, and will renovate its existing Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia exhibition in February of this year. Please Touch has also committed to bringing the Children’s Museum of Manhattan’s feature exhibit America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Far and Near to Philadelphia in 2019, and is in the planning stages for Centennial Innovations, a new original exhibit that will bring the story and relevance of Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial Exhibition to life for today’s children and families as they imagine the future together.

At today’s event at The Union League of Philadelphia, Wellenbach presented these plans publicly for the first time to business and cultural leaders, local influencers, and stakeholders. The event also featured remarks from newly confirmed Chair of the Please Touch Museum Board of Trustees, Kristen Vieira Traynor.

“Having served on the Please Touch Museum board for the past 10 years, I am thrilled to step into this leadership role at such an exciting point in institutional history,” Traynor noted. “The organization has positioned itself for success and continued growth through our commitment to a number of strategic initiatives, including expanding the Board of Trustees. We welcomed six new members just yesterday, with plans to grow much further. Our new members’ range in age, background, and expertise exemplify our efforts to engage fiduciary and strategic advisors to the Museum who represent the diversity of the communities that the Museum serves.”

Please Touch Museum proudly announces the confirmation of the following new trustees:

- **Christine Campbell**: Chief Client Officer/COO Origin Healthcare Solutions
- **Karen Griffith Gryga**: Chief Investment Officer at Dreamit
- **Christopher Scarpa**: Partner, Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP
- **Regina Tracey**: Head of Corporate Social Responsibility and Internal Communications: Axalta Coating Systems
- **Shawn Tuli**: VP of Acquisitions and Development Hersha Hospitality Management
- **Victoria Wilson**: Senior Project Manager Clinical Effectiveness and Quality Improvement, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia’s Chief Education Officer in the Mayor’s Office of Education Otis Hackney III and the Chief Academic Support Officer for the Philadelphia School District Cheryl Logan were also on hand for the exciting event to share their perspectives on the importance of Please Touch Museum’s work.
“Since its founding 40 years ago, Please Touch Museum has been an integral partner in the education of our youngest citizens,” said Hackney. “Learning begins long before children enter the classroom, and Please Touch Museum and the City of Philadelphia share a commitment to stressing the critical importance of these developmental years. We look forward to continuing our work together as the Museum embraces a new strategic vision.”

The strategic planning process was led by Michael Kaiser of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland, and funded with support from the William Penn Foundation.

“Not only is the Please Touch Museum a storied destination for multiple generations of Philadelphians, it’s an important anchor of Fairmount Park and the West Parkside neighborhood. With its learning-through-play mission, the Museum is also a resource for early childhood education, a focus area for the Foundation for decades. For these reasons, we were pleased to help fund the Museum’s strategic planning process to engage generations of children and families to come,” said Janet Haas, Board Chair, William Penn Foundation.

The plan’s executive summary is available on Please Touch Museum’s website at http://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org/about/reports/.

About Please Touch Museum
Please Touch Museum’s mission is to change a child’s life as they discover the power of learning through play. Recognized locally and nationally as one of the best children’s museums, Please Touch Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is $19 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-581-3181 or visit our website at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.

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