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Please Touch Museum to Open Centennial Innovations, a New, Permanent Gallery, in Spring 2020

Bringing a physical and programmatic transformation to its lower level, Centennial Innovations will ignite the Museum’s mission of learning through play

PHILADELPHIA – Please Touch Museum (PTM), a national leader in children’s museums, today announced Centennial Innovations, a new, $1.75 million permanent gallery investment, which is set to open at PTM in Spring 2020. This ambitious gallery, bursting with color and engaging interactives, will explore how creativity and critical thinking skills can inspire children to solve problems, right wrongs and transform our world.

Building upon PTM’s commitment to address contemporary social issues and represent Philadelphia’s culturally diverse populations, Centennial Innovations will reimagine how the 1876 Centennial World’s Fair is celebrated and understood by highlighting how the past connects to – and teaches us about – the future. The content of this new 5,000 square-foot exhibit will ask both children and adults to consider the meaning of innovation through the question, “If you could change the world…?”. With multi-sensory interactives emphasizing the diverse people and inventions that made history in 1876, visitors will be inspired to brainstorm their own answers to this all-important question.

Major support for Centennial Innovations has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Hess Foundation, The Anderson Family Foundation, and the City of Philadelphia with special thanks to Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr. Funding for Centennial Innovations is also supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
“Please Touch Museum is a leading voice in the childhood learning and development field and Centennial Innovations will join our Creative Arts Studio in further developing children’s creativity, confidence and curiosity,” said Patricia D. Wellenbach, president and CEO of Please Touch Museum. “We are creating an inclusive space for all children to articulate their biggest and brightest ideas while boldly encouraging them to understand how some of the same challenges faced in 1876 still exist today – right here in Philadelphia and around the world. We are delighted to receive support from The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, NEH, Hess Foundation, The Anderson Family Foundation, the City of Philadelphia, PHMC and all of our generous benefactors to create Centennial Innovations and we are grateful for their endorsement of this vision.”

Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr., representing Philadelphia’s 4th District, which is home to Please Touch Museum, offered his support for this new gallery saying, “Past is prologue and through Centennial Innovations, visitors will learn about the triumphs of the Centennial World’s Fair as well as its shortcomings in terms of social inequity and inclusion. Most importantly, the exhibit will encourage visitors of all ages to create a better, more just world. Centennial Innovations will be one of the most relevant learning experiences in our city for children and I am excited for its opening next spring.”

Designed by Gallagher & Associates, an internationally recognized museum planning and design firm, Centennial Innovations will replace the Museum’s legacy exhibit, Centennial Exploration, which closed to the public on November 1. Several beloved artifacts from that exhibit, notably the train, will be restored and redeployed in the Museum.

The City of Philadelphia’s historic model of the 1876 World’s Fair will be fully preserved and will remain as a centerpiece of the new Centennial Innovations. Through its content, the gallery will connect directly to the social studies curriculum used statewide in middle grades, including in the School District of Philadelphia. Programming will be designed to engage and serve children up to grade 4 through curriculum-based school programs and out-of-school educational workshops.

“Centennial Innovations will give new life to the incredible World’s Fair model we have at PTM, allowing it to become a teaching tool for formal and informal learning,” said Wellenbach. “In designing content and programming for this new gallery, we look forward to developing an even greater partnership and curriculum integration with schools across the region.”

Construction of Centennial Innovations is now underway. The completion of the new gallery will mark the first phase of a dynamic transformation in the Museum’s lower level. In creating a central and connected space between Centennial Innovations, Creative
Arts Studio and a forthcoming Makerspace, PTM continues to enhance its mission in an authentic way that best prepares children for lifelong learning and success.

To view renderings of Centennial Innovations, please visit: www.pleasetouchmuseum.org/centennial.

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, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is $19.95 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.