Berkshire Museum Press Release
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**Berkshire Museum presents Festival of Trees 2015: Westward Ho Ho Ho!**

Annual holiday celebration opens Friday, November 13 with a Festive Preview Party

[PITTSFIELD, MA] – It’s a grand celebration of the American West when **Festival of Trees 2015: Westward Ho Ho Ho!** opens at the Berkshire Museum on Friday evening, November 13, 2015, with a Festive Preview Party, and is on view to the public from Saturday, November 14, 2015, through Sunday, January 3, 2016. Widely regarded as the unofficial kickoff of the holiday season in the Berkshires, the annual event will feature more than 100 twinkling trees decorated to evoke the adventure and romance of the American West.

**Festival of Trees 2015: Westward Ho Ho Ho!** is proudly sponsored by Hill Engineers, Architects, Planners Inc.; Pittsfield Cooperative Bank; RBC Wealth Management; and Berkshire Magazine.

The **Festival of Trees 2015: Westward Ho Ho Ho!** Festive Preview Party takes place Friday, November 13, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Round up your family and friends for a foot-stompin’, hee-hawin’ good time! Take a first look at the decorated holiday trees, try the real cowboy saddles, and sample delicious refreshments at a frontier party with cowboys, cowgirls, and of course plenty of fun! Toe-tappin’ tunes will be played by Andy Wrba and Friends, a local band featuring acclaimed local bassist Andy Wrba, Chris Merenda on the banjo and guitar, and Benny Kohn on piano. Tickets are $50
adult, $25 child; Museum members $30 adult, $15 child; children 3 and under free. For ticket information, visit berkshiremuseum.org/support/festival-of-trees/.

The much-anticipated Festival of Trees will feature creative holiday trees sponsored by businesses, schools, and community organizations, inspired by this year’s theme of Westward Ho Ho Ho! Visitors can expect to see lots of wonderful trees with cowboy hats and boots, bright bandannas, horses, bison, stagecoaches, cactuses, and all manner of Western flair. The Festival of Trees is a significant fundraiser for Berkshire Museum every year — the proceeds benefit the education programs that provide more than 17,000 educational experiences annually. For more information on how to participate with a decorated tree, please visit berkshiremuseum.org/support/festival-of-trees/.

This year, for the first time, the name for the Festival of Trees was chosen through a Facebook contest, open to the community. “Westward Ho Ho Ho!” was suggested by Tracey Richards, who won tickets to the Preview Party and a tree in the Festival. She generously donated her tree to Moments House, so that visitors to Festival of Trees 2015 will learn about the good work that Moments House does for Berkshire County families dealing with cancer.

A talented team of staff members from the Guardian Life Insurance Company has created a marvelous interactive display as part of the American West exhibition and Festival of Trees. A covered wagon sits in front of a Western night sky with mountains on the horizon, a campfire to one side and a towering cactus on the other. Visitors can climb up onto the seat of the covered wagon and have their picture taken as they take the reins and imagine they are pioneers ready to conquer the frontier.

This year’s Western theme is inspired by the dual American West exhibitions, National Geographic Greatest Photographs of the American West and Go West, on view September 26-January 3. American West is sponsored by MountainOne and by Marita and David Glodt.
Featuring the best images of the West published by the iconic magazine since 1889, *National Geographic Greatest Photographs of the American West* includes works by more than 50 different photographers. Wide open spaces, spectacular rock formations, and the cowboy life are on view alongside struggles for limited natural resources, Native American cultural continuity, and new energy sources. *National Geographic Greatest Photographs of the American West* was organized with the National Museum of Wildlife Art of the United States and Museums West; presented by the Mays Family Foundation; traveled by National Geographic.

Thinking of the American West evokes iconic images, from cowboys driving cattle across open prairie to herds of bison. *Go West*, organized by the Museum staff, celebrates these traditions with rodeo memorabilia, a full-size bison skeleton, and lots of interactive stations: Sit on a real rodeo saddle, watch vintage cowboy shows from the 1960s, and see a live rattlesnake and a gila monster!

**About the Berkshire Museum**

Located in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, at 39 South St., the Berkshire Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child; Museum members and children age 3 and under always enjoy free admission. For more information, visit www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

In association with the Smithsonian since 2013, Berkshire Museum is part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share the Smithsonian's resources with the nation.

Established by Zenas Crane in 1903, Berkshire Museum integrates art, history, and natural science in a wide range of programs and exhibitions that inspire educational connections between the disciplines. Little Cinema is open year-round. Spark!Lab, Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, Worlds in Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibits are ongoing.

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