Museums for All at the Berkshire Museum a success after first year

Access program for low-income families grows in popularity

[Pittsfield, Mass.] – In its first year, the Museums for All program has been a big success at the Berkshire Museum, with more than 800 visitors participating. Initiated in September 2015, Museums for All, a signature access program of the Association of Children’s Museums (ACM) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), enables low-income families (two adults and two children) to visit the Berkshire Museum free with the presentation of an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. The program is designed to encourage families of all backgrounds to visit museums regularly and build lifelong museum habits.

Berkshire Museum’s participation in this program is proudly funded by TD Charitable Foundation.

“Adopting the Museums for All and other programs to remove financial access as a barrier to participation is part of a concerted effort to open our doors to ever larger numbers of people,” says Van Shields, Berkshire Museum’s executive director. “In addition to providing opportunities for more people to benefit from our programs, we are also providing opportunities for more people to connect with each other who might not otherwise do so. We believe that strengthens our social fabric which is why our mission statement includes a commitment to ‘bring people together.’”

Since September 2015, a total of 812 visitors—503 adults and 309 children—have used the Museums for All program to visit the Berkshire Museum. That’s an average of 3 people per day, nearly 100 per month. Since the inception of the program, each month has seen an increase in participation over the previous month; in May, 153 visitors used the program to gain access to the Museum’s exhibitions and programs.
About the Institute of Museum and Library Services
The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Their mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Their grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow them on Facebook and Twitter.

About Association of Children’s Museums (ACM)
In an increasingly complex world, children’s museums provide a place where all kids can learn through play and exploration with the caring adults in their lives. There are approximately 400 children’s museums around the world, which annually reach more than thirty-one million visitors. ACM provides leadership, professional development, advocacy and resources for its member organizations and individuals. To learn more about ACM and to find an ACM-member children’s museum near you, visit www.ChildrensMuseums.org.

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 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. Finding Raven: Art and Stories of the Northwest Coast is on view through October 30. Tiny Titans: Dinosaur Eggs and Babies is on view through August 28. Living on Earth: The Work of Robert Hite, a solo show of sculpture and photography co-presented by the Berkshire Museum and Hancock Shaker Village, is on view at both venues through October
30. 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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