Curiosity Incubator opens at the Berkshire Museum

February 17, 2017

[Pittsfield, Mass.] – Experience the Berkshire Museum in a whole new way when the Curiosity Incubator opens February 17, 2017. Visitors will touch, learn, and explore in the Curiosity Incubator, discovering exciting ways to learn about science and history through state-of-the-art interactive stations. Curiosity Incubator is generously sponsored by the Feigenbaum Foundation and the Josephine and Louise Crane Foundation.

An opening celebration for the Curiosity Incubator will be held Friday, February 17, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., when visitors will preview the brand-new Curiosity Incubator with the Museum’s Experience Team and be among the first to try the intriguing new interactive exhibits. The event is free and open to the community, part of the Ten Days of Play Community Night sponsored by Greylock Federal Credit Union.

Using the latest technology, Curiosity Incubator offers an engaging, immersive, and innovative experience of what makes us humans and what connects us, from our shared languages and stories of arrival and immigration to cultural and ethnic traditions. An entire second-floor gallery has been transformed into the Curiosity Incubator, with vivid full-wall graphics, touch screens, virtual-reality headsets, video monitors, a photo booth, and fresh ways to view objects from the Museum’s collection.
The story of Pahat, the mummy from ancient Egypt that has been a favorite of museumgoers for more than 100 years, comes to life through a full-size interactive touchscreen with which visitors can explore the science and history of mummification. Imagine peeling back the layers of time (and of the mummy) to understand how ancient trade routes influenced changes and advances in the process. Understand the hieroglyphics that describe Pahat, the role he played, and the meaning of all the animals and creatures depicted on his elaborate sarcophagus.

Language is one of the characteristics that set humans apart, with more than 7,000 languages spoken around the world. Visitors will learn about writing, from cuneiform to hieroglyphics to today’s social media, and be able to spell their names in hieroglyphics with colorful magnets. They will even hear “good morning” said in ten languages from around the globe!

Virtual reality headsets provide a thrilling globe-trotting experience, with participants transported to dining tables all around the world, sharing international foods and mealtime traditions.

A special quilt, handmade in Pittsfield one hundred years ago, symbolizes the way women have used fabric and threads to create items for their homes that held special meaning for their families. Inspired by this historic quilt, visitors will add colorful ribbons to a community tapestry, crafting a quilt of diversity to represent our diverse cultural backgrounds. Visitors will be able to trace their ancestors’ countries of origin and journeys to New England and respond to queries about immigration and current events, initiating a wider conversation.

It’s a human trait to want to make a statement, to participate, and to share photographs and mementos. Years ago someone might have had their portrait painted; today they take a selfie and post it on social media. Museumgoers can
leave their mark in the gallery by posing in the photo booth and adding their likeness to the community photo wall.

“We are proud to offer the **Curiosity Incubator** to the community," says Van Shields, Berkshire Museum’s executive director. "It is an exciting first step in making our Museum a more vibrant and engaging institution, as we move toward providing innovative twenty-first century experiences and educational opportunities to our visitors.”

The **Curiosity Incubator** will serve as a prototype and a test center for fresh and exciting exhibition and program ideas being considered for future installations. The Museum is working on a master plan that will include innovative interdisciplinary interpretation in the galleries, and visitor feedback generated by the **Curiosity Incubator** will be evaluated as part of the process. In addition, the Museum will be offering an enrichment program for all Pittsfield Public Schools fourth graders tied to the **Curiosity Incubator**. A specially designed curriculum will be utilized to engage these students both in the classroom and at the Museum.

**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](http://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.

The Berkshire Museum integrates science, history, and the arts in dynamic educational and engaging programs and exhibitions for visitors of all ages. **Tell Me More … Time and Travel, Extreme Exploration, and Art of the Armament** is on
view through April 30, 2017. The Science of Color is on view through April 30, 2017. Little Cinema is open year-round. Lab102, Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, Worlds in Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibits are ongoing.

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