BERKSHIRE MUSEUM’S KINDERGARTEN GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS

Supported by Grant from Berkshire Bank

PITTSFIELD, MA – Children entering kindergarten all across Massachusetts in September and their parents and caregivers will now have access to In Kindergarten, an award-winning, colorful, and child-friendly guide developed by the Berkshire Museum to ease the transition to school. The guide is being distributed statewide for the first time thanks to a grant provided by Berkshire Bank.

“For elementary school students in Berkshire County, In Kindergarten has been a must-read and a fun and informative guide to a brand-new world,” said Jeff Rodgers, Executive Director of the Berkshire Museum. “We are grateful to Berkshire Bank and all our partners to be able to share this guide with children, parents, and caregivers all across Massachusetts.”

In Kindergarten was developed in 2014 by the Berkshire Museum in consultation with early childhood professionals and local kindergarten teachers to address social and emotional milestones as well as the academic skills children should have before entering kindergarten. It aims to help children get familiar with a school environment and parents to understand the possible anxieties and stresses of beginning formal education.

Every current elementary school student in Berkshire County has received this guide since it was first created five years ago. It won Honorable Mention in 2015 in the New England Museum Association publication category.

“One of our top priorities is working to ensure children are ready to learn when they enter Kindergarten, so they will be much more likely to succeed as they progress through school,” said Richard Marotta, Berkshire Bank Chief Executive Officer. “We applaud the Berkshire Museum for spearheading this award-winning In Kindergarten book to help parents better prepare their children for this exciting new chapter that will set the course for their lives. We are so proud to serve as a partner in expanding this opportunity to every incoming Kindergarten student throughout the state of Massachusetts.”
Berkshire Museum worked with Boston Children’s Museum to actively reach out to local institutions and organizations to strengthen and increase collaboration across museums, libraries, community organizations and Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Programs (CFCE) to achieve the goals of the project.

The statewide distribution is organized by the Berkshire Museum through an early childhood initiative, “School Readiness Through Partnerships: Museums, Libraries and State Early Learning Systems Project.” As part of this initiative, the Berkshire Museum works collaboratively with peer institutions across the Commonwealth that will be distributing the guide in their communities.

Specifically, **In Kindergarten** will be distributed by:

- **Boston Children’s Museum**
- **Heritage Museums and Gardens** (Sandwich)
- **Children’s Museum of Greater Fall River**
- **EcoTarium Museum of Science and Nature** (Worcester)
- **Central Massachusetts Library Advocates** (Worcester)
- **Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham**
- **Pathways for Children** (Gloucester, Beverly, Salem)
- **Chicopee Public Library**

The Berkshire Museum also is working with Coordinated Family and Community Engagement coordinators. There are more than 90 CFCE programs across the state, and the CFCE network provides services to 350 cities and towns in Massachusetts, helping to promote and support parent education and family engagement, early literacy and child development, collaboration between local early education and care partners, transitions between early education and care settings, home and school, and high-quality programs and service delivery.

The Berkshire Museum combines art, science, and history to create thought-provoking experiences for people of all ages through robust educational opportunities and exhibitions featuring its collection of 40,000 objects. The museum was founded more than 100 years ago by Zenas Crane, owner of Crane & Company in nearby Dalton, MA, who sought to provide his neighbors what he called “a window on the world.”

**Berkshire Bank** is recognized for its entrepreneurial approach, relationship customer experience, distinctive culture and embracing and celebrating the diversity of all customers, employees and suppliers – as its commitment to diversity continues to grow. With $13.9 billion in assets, Berkshire provides business and consumer banking, mortgage, wealth management, investment and insurance services through 132 full service branch offices throughout New York, Connecticut, Vermont, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, including Commerce Bank, a division of Berkshire Bank. Berkshire Hills Bancorp (NYSE: BHLB) is the parent of Berkshire Bank. Berkshire Bank was named one of Massachusetts' Most Charitable Companies by the Boston Business Journal in 2018.

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