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Note: High-res images available upon request

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Museum Earns National Honor for Local Focus

*Organization receives Promising Practice Award
from MetLife Foundation & Association of Children's Museums*

MADISON, Wis. (May 12, 2010) — What exactly does it mean when people say “think globally, act locally”? For Madison Children’s Museum, it means a commitment to local people, products, and culture. It means building the Evjue Early Learning Gallery using locally grown, sustainably harvested materials. It means employing only local artists and craftspeople, and working directly with local schools and the community to create museum experiences.

As a result of these ongoing efforts, Madison Children’s Museum (MCM) received the highest honor in the 2010 Promising Practice Award competition for its *Only Local Initiative*. As the museum prepares to open in a completely renovated 1929 building on August 14, this award recognizes the museum’s commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

“As we have grown as an organization dedicated to helping children and families protect the environment, we came to realize that being ‘natural’ was not enough,” says MCM Executive Director Ruth Shelly. “Committing ourselves to using local people, products, and processes not only saves on transportation costs, but also creates a new museum that authentically reflects our community’s wealth of talent and resources. In addition, every dollar we raise and spend stays in our region, enhancing the local economy and building civic pride.”

Madison Children’s Museum has challenged itself to use local materials and services in every aspect of development, construction, and programming for its new location. To refurbish the facility, the museum employed a local contractor, architects, artisans, designers, exhibit fabricators, and cabinetmakers; staff additionally sought out University of Wisconsin-Madison and Madison Area Technical College art and graphic design students for apprenticeships, internships, and fabrication assistance. Local volunteers are donating enormous amounts of time and energy to the effort. For instance, a volunteer model train group is laying out, designing, and installing a working model train above the museum’s DeAtley Community Concourse.

From involving local schoolchildren in program development and the making of public art — such as decorative tiles for all of the museum’s bathrooms and bottle cap mosaics for the Jim & Susan Bakke Art Studio — to working with more than 100 local artists on exhibit fabrication and public art pieces, the *Only Local Initiative* reflects Madison Children’s Museum’s pledge to create a true community museum while reducing its carbon footprint and “going beyond green.”

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Whenever possible, the museum is using recycled and reclaimed local materials, such as an artistically laid gym floor reclaimed from a high school in Oak Creek, Wis., and an entire exhibit made with more than 90 percent reclaimed parts.

The museum, which hopes to be the first in Wisconsin to obtain LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, is also working to reduce environmental waste by emphasizing electronic communication, and encouraging bike and public transportation use by employees and visitors. A *Locally Grown* exhibit in the new museum will make the building itself a teaching tool, pointing out green and local features throughout the facility that can serve as sustainable models for other organizations.

The 2010 MetLife Foundation & Association of Children's Museums Promising Practice Awards honor children's museums with the best examples of green and sustainable practices. MCM's *Only Local Initiative* demonstrates how "children's museums provide a place where families can learn through play how to make a difference in their own backyard," says Janet Rice Elman, executive director of the Association of Children's Museums.

In addition to MCM, which received \$7,500, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose (Calif.) and The Discovery Museums (Acton, Mass.) received 2010 Promising Practice Award grants of \$7,500 and \$5,000, respectively.

The awards were announced Thursday, May 6, at the Association of Children's Museums' InterActivity 2010: Invest Early • Inspire Growth conference in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

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Madison Children's Museum: Madison Children's Museum (MCM) is an award-winning organization which fosters family and community connections, and provides a place where every child can learn through play in an interactive environment. MCM's hands-on exhibits and programs celebrate and encourage children's imaginations and the power of play as the cornerstone of learning.

The museum moved out of its 100 State Street facility on Jan. 4 and is preparing for the opening of its new building at 100 N. Hamilton Street on the north corner of the Capitol Square. It will reopen August 14 with plenty of new, exciting exhibits along with some favorites from the previous location. While the museum is closed, go to MadisonChildrensMuseum.org for a schedule of Road Show events, sponsored by Target.