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**National Children's Museum opens Friday, Dec. 14 at National Harbor, Md.
*Region eager to welcome only national museum exclusively for children***

NATIONAL HARBOR, MD (Dec. 13, 2012) – The National Children's Museum (NCM) opens its doors for the first time on Friday, Dec. 14, 2012 at National Harbor in Prince George's County, Md. The 23,000 sq. ft. space (18,000 sq. ft. of public space), with exhibits and programming designed to encourage children to learn through play, will serve more than 200,000 children and families onsite annually.

As the only congressionally designated museum focused exclusively on children, the mission of the National Children's Museum is to inspire children to care about and improve the world. The *Sesame Street*-themed 3 & Under gallery, created in partnership with Sesame Workshop, facilitates exploration and discovery for NCM's visitors under 3 ft. tall or younger than age 3. *Our World* familiarizes children with community citizenship through three fundamental areas: *Map Zone* offers a contextual and physical global perspective; *My Town* demonstrates that citizenship starts at home, offering participatory exhibits that promote social engagement within one's community; and *World Cultures* transports visitors to various global regions and highlights diverse cultures and traditions. Tanzania will be the first country profiled in the marketplace in the *World Cultures* exhibit.

"The National Children's Museum takes our young visitors from their homes to the world, sharing the importance of global citizenship and personal responsibility in an open-ended, playful environment," said NCM President & CEO Willard Whitson. "We are proud to support our mission in the Washington, D.C. area, while serving children and their families from beyond the region."

The Museum's exhibits are complemented by rich, staff-led programming, including hands-on activities such as paper bead making and design; literature-based arts and crafts; interaction with roaming *Sesame Street* characters and professional actors portraying a chef, mayoral candidates engaged in debates and even a reporter who's dedicated to staying on top of *My Town* events. A theatre that accommodates 130 people adds another dimension to the experience, with participatory productions and entertainment from both NCM's theatre ensemble and guest performers. The Museum's Center for Learning and Innovation houses program rooms adjacent to the exhibit areas for special activities, birthday parties, visiting school groups and other events.

NCM will welcome 2013 with "Noon Year's Eve" on Monday, Dec. 31, an all-day celebration featuring a noontime parade, theatre performances and New Year's-themed programs. The first month of the year will also bring the inaugural GEICO Free Family Night, which will take place on Friday, Jan. 18, 2013 from 5 to 8 p.m. Future GEICO Free Family Nights will occur on the third Friday of each month. A full events calendar and holiday hours are available at www.ncm.museum.

The National Children's Museum is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. between Labor Day and Memorial Day, and will remain open until 7 p.m. during the summer months.

Admission is \$10 per person, with no cost for infants 12 months and under. NCM also offers group rates (consisting of 10 people or more and reserved in advance) at \$8 per child and \$10 per adult, with one adult receiving free entry for every five children. Various membership package options are available, offering free year-round admission, exclusive benefits and access to special Museum events.

The Museum will begin accepting reservations for private birthday parties beginning Monday, Jan. 7, 2013, with parties beginning in March. Educators can begin reserving school field trips on Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2013.

The Museum is funded by a combination of private and public sources, including the State of Maryland, Prince George's County, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Constellation and GEICO. NCM continues to seek funding and broad support for the indoor experience as well as the outdoor experience, a year-round space tentatively scheduled to open in 2014.

The National Children's Museum is located at 151 St. George Blvd. in National Harbor, Md. The Museum's main phone number is 301.392.2400. Additional information can be found at www.ncm.museum.

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About National Children's Museum

The National Children's Museum (NCM) is a world-class cultural and educational center (www.ncm.museum) that inspires children to care about and improve the world. NCM opens on December 14 at National Harbor in Prince George's County, Md. After operating as a "museum without walls" for several years, the Museum is now Greater Washington's premier family attraction and the only national museum dedicated especially to children and their families and caregivers. NCM was designated by Congress in 2003 and was founded in 1974 as the Capital Children's Museum.