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**ACTRESS VANESSA WILLIAMS JOINS
WESTCHESTER CHILDREN'S MUSEUM BOARD OF ADVISORS**

**MS. WILLIAMS TO HELP RAISE AWARENESS FOR MUSEUM CAMPAIGN
AND SERVE AS HONOREE OF ANNUAL BENEFIT**

Rye, NY, January 12, 2009...The Westchester Children's Museum announced today the election of acclaimed actress and performer Vanessa Williams to its Board of Advisors. Ms. Williams will also serve as the Honoree of the Museum's annual Benefit, scheduled for April 4, 2009.



Access to Ms. Williams' participation as a spokesperson for the Museum and as a gala honoree, will greatly raise awareness for the campaign to build a vibrant children's museum to serve the region of Westchester, Fairfield, Bronx, Rockland, Putnam, and beyond. Ms. Williams, currently starring in the critically acclaimed television series "Ugly Betty," is a lifelong resident of Westchester and is currently raising her own family here.

"We are deeply honored and so delighted to welcome Vanessa Williams into the campaign to build the Westchester Children's Museum," states Tracy R. Kay, Executive Director of the Westchester Children's Museum. "Ms. Williams has shown a deep commitment to children's education in arts and culture, which, combined with the fact that her parents were well respected educators of young people in the Westchester public school system,

gives Ms. Williams an appreciation of the value that a children's museum can bring to families and schools. We welcome her professional expertise and personal commitment to the project."

The Westchester Children's Museum is in a campaign to raise the funds to build the museum at the historic landmark Bathhouses at Rye Playland. The Westchester Children's Museum will be a fully hand-on, full-service cultural and educational institution for children with their families, caregivers and schools. The exhibitions and programs will draw from the dramatic history, cultural diversity, flourishing environments and ecosystems, and the rich literary and artistic traditions of the region.

"The vision of the Westchester Children's Museum to create a place that welcomes and nurtures the imagination and confidence of all our children, regardless of cultural or socioeconomic background, learning or physical ability. This is in line with my own interest in supporting causes that address educational issues and provide aid to at risk youth," states Vanessa Williams. "I believe that this region needs a place like this, where our children lead the process of discovery and we as parents, grandparents, and educators get to share their experience of learning about the world around them."

Throughout her performing career, Vanessa Williams has maintained a reputation as one of the most respected and multi-faceted entertainers in the world, amassing accomplishments and accolades,

one after another. She has conquered the musical charts, Broadway, music videos, television and motion pictures. She has sold over four million albums worldwide and her skills as an actress on stage, in film and on television have earned praise from the most seasoned of critics.

Performing – and music in particular – has always played an important role in Ms. William’s life. Born in Millwood, New York, Vanessa and her younger brother Christopher’s early years were spent surrounded by music. Her mother, Helen, and beloved late father, Milton Williams were both music teachers who recognized her musical gifts early on and encouraged her to pursue her love of the arts. When she was young, Ms. Williams acted, danced, played piano and French horn in her high school orchestra, concert band and marching band and she sang in the concert choir and chorus. Her early interest in performing led to a passion for musical theatre, which began in school and continued as she went on to star in numerous community theatre productions.

Ms. William’s charitable contributions are many and varied, embracing and supporting such issues as education, homelessness, abuse, women’s issues, AIDS and anything having to do with children. Specifically, she is actively involved with such organizations as Green Chimneys, a working farm in Westchester County that provides educational and residential programs to help troubled inner-city adolescents; The Open Door, which provides walk-in medical care for homeless families; The Cottage School for displaced young women and she is a Board Member of Chappaqua School Foundation’s Scholarship Fund. She has been a Board Member of Special Olympics International since 1999.

Westchester Children’s Museum Campaign Status

This spring, the Westchester County Board of Legislature voted to spend \$8.8 million to renovate the historic landmark Bathhouses at Rye Playland, opening the door to a unique public/private partnership. Most recently, the Museum received a pledge of \$1.3 million from the Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation. The gift marked a milestone in the campaign in both the unprecedented amount, and in bringing the funds raised past the halfway mark in its Phase I Campaign goal of \$7.5 million by the time the County has completed its renovations on the Playland Bathhouses in mid-2009. At that time, the Museum will be prepared to take over the Bathhouses and build out the interior. With the Carvel Foundation gift, the Museum has raised \$4 million in capital gifts and pledges towards that goal. To complete the project, the Phase II goal is \$7 million to open and begin operating the Museum at the end of 2010. The Museum is seeking support from individuals, foundations, corporations and local business, as well as government and public sources.

About the Westchester Children’s Museum

With guidance from teachers, education administrators, cultural and community leaders, and parents, the exhibitions and programs of the Museum will draw from the dramatic history, cultural diversity, flourishing environments and ecosystems, and the rich literary and artistic traditions of the region including Westchester, The Bronx, Fairfield, Rockland, and Putnam. The educational content will be based on elementary school curriculum through fifth grade and the best practices in early childhood development studies. Programming will be for children ages 0-10, but learning obviously does not stop there. Opportunities for children to continue to grow personally, and professionally, will be developed through apprenticeships for middle and high school age students. At this time, the Westchester Children’s Museum operates as a “museum without walls.” Until the walls are built, the Museum offers as much programming as possible through the help of volunteers and collaborating organizations.

The Westchester Children’s Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

To donate, volunteer, or just to learn more, the public can visit www.discoverWCM.org or call the office of the Westchester Children’s Museum at 914-421-5050.
