



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Bill Schlageter, Director of Marketing, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

bschlageter@pittsburghkids.org

412-559-2744

**Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
Partnering With Reading Is FUNdamental Pittsburgh
and The Education Partnership with Support from Local Foundations
to Produce 'Boxes of Joy' This Summer for Children**

Program is Supported by Leading Philanthropic Organizations including the Elsie Hilliard Hillman Foundation, The Grable Foundation, Richard K. Mellon Foundation, and The Pittsburgh Foundation to Encourage Hands On Learning

PITTSBURGH (July 17, 2020)—Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Reading is FUNdamental (RIF) Pittsburgh, The Education Partnership and a group of local foundations have joined together to bring joy to underserved children this summer and to increase access to learning opportunities.

The '**Boxes of Joy**' project will supply 3,500 boxes filled with new toys, books and art materials to children and families in the region to help inspire creativity and spark fun at a time when many quintessential summer experiences - camps, community pools, vacations and play dates - are unavailable.

Each box contains a variety of items appealing to a wide range of ages, valued at well over \$100; items include bug stamp kits, footballs, sketch books, colored paper, story cubes, putty, gel pens, bouncy balls, kites and books supplied by RIF Pittsburgh. The contents are suitable for children to enjoy on their own or as part of a family activity.

"We're thrilled to participate in this project to bring some joy to children in our community," said Jane Werner, Executive Director of Children's Museum of Pittsburgh. "We miss interacting

with children and families as they explore the Museum, and we're pleased to help deliver a bit of fun and learning they can enjoy at home."

'Boxes of Joy' are made possible with support from the Elsie Hilliard Hillman Foundation, The Grable Foundation, Richard K. Mellon Foundation, and The Pittsburgh Foundation.

The foundations recognized a need to provide much needed learning and entertainment for children this summer, and together asked Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, The Education Partnership, and RIF Pittsburgh to help fulfill their vision due to the expertise each one brings to the table in learning, literacy, education, and supply logistics.

Items for the **'Boxes of Joy'** were sourced by the Children's Museum, The Education Partnership and RIF Pittsburgh. Approximately 7,000 books featuring diverse titles and authors were supplied by RIF Pittsburgh. The boxes are being assembled by staff from the Children's Museum and The Education Partnership, as well as volunteers, at the offices of The Education Partnership. They will be distributed over the next few weeks through family support centers, and RIF Pittsburgh's partner sites and schools across Pittsburgh and Wilkesburg.

"We are delighted to be able to leverage our long-term relationships to bring some excitement to kids throughout our communities," said Florri Ladov, Executive Director of RIF Pittsburgh. "Families with fewer resources at home are struggling more to keep kids happy and motivated in these challenging times, and terrific books and cool stuff to explore will bring smiles to a lot of faces."

The collaboration is a first for the region.

"This is an amazing group of partners with a fantastic cause. Many families do not have access to the after-school programs and community centers that they rely on due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and our experience in supplying teachers and schools was a great fit when it came to producing boxes that were both fun and educational," said Josh Whiteside, Executive Director of The Education Partnership.

The idea for **'Boxes of Joy'** stems from philanthropist Elsie Hillman, who led a fundraising effort in Summer 2004 to open 16 neighborhood public pools and rec centers in Pittsburgh that were in danger of remaining closed due to a lack of funding. The unexpected closure of so many children's programs and activities due to COVID-19 this summer, made it critically important to offer children and families some relief during this time of stress and difficulty.

"We wanted to join forces with the leading foundations to support underserved children whose summertime activities have been severely impacted due to COVID-19," said Lisa Johns, Vice President, Finance – Hillman Family Foundations. "The Boxes of Joy project is an opportunity to provide kids with materials that are fun, that inspire them, and provide hands on learning opportunities."

To see a video of the **'Boxes of Joy'** project, click here: <https://youtu.be/s4T2HCupSHY>

For media availability and interview requests, or to coordinate a media availability at a distribution site please contact: Bill Schlageter, Director of Marketing, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, at bschlageter@pittsburghkids.org, 412-559-2744.

For more information on the '**Boxes of Joy**' project, contact Chip Lindsey, Director of Education, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, at clindsey@pittsburghkids.org.

High resolution photos and b-roll video are available here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/132hNSERkIDXtBPTJisnSFtkLn5gS_tN4?usp=sharing

High resolution logos of everyone involved are available here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tLb4RUGLFq9yKcyjhahcG-R9kQ4feXQQ?usp=sharing>

For more information on RIF Pittsburgh: <http://www.rifpittsburgh.org/>

For more about the Elsie Hilliard Hillman Foundation: <https://hillmanfamilyfoundations.org/foundations/elsie-h-hillman-foundation/>

For more information on The Education Partnership: <https://theeducationpartnership.org/>

For more about Richard K. Mellon Foundation: <https://www.rkmf.org/>

For more about The Pittsburgh Foundation: <https://pittsburghfoundation.org/>

For more about The Grable Foundation: <https://grable.org/>

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