

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 1, 2010

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PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE 15TH ANNUAL 'GREAT FRIEND TO KIDS AWARDS'

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Please Touch Museum, the Children’s Museum of Philadelphia, is pleased to announce the winners of the 15th Annual Great Friend to Kids (GFTK) Awards, honoring individuals and organizations with ties to the Greater Philadelphia region making outstanding contributions to enriching the lives of children. The awards will be presented at a ceremony at Memorial Hall on Thursday, October 7, from 6:30–10:00 p.m. All proceeds from the 15th Annual GFTK Awards will support Please Touch Museum’s exhibits and programs for young children and their families.

“The four individuals recognized this year are wonderful advocates and truly embody the title of Great Friends to Kids,” says Laura Foster, President and CEO of Please Touch Museum. “They have inspired, served, educated, and enriched the lives of children in our region, and by recognizing their efforts we hope to inspire others to make similar efforts in the community.”

This year’s winners are:

Neha Gupta of Yardley, PA

Marianne Raphaely of Cherry Hill, NJ

Simon’s Fund of Plymouth Meeting, PA

Rev. Floyd L. White, III of Camden, NJ

The ceremony will feature cocktails and heavy hors d’oeuvres, as well as a short video featuring each recipient and their contribution to the community. Each of the winners is presented with a special award designed by Philadelphia artist Leo Sewell, creator of Please Touch Museum’s soaring Statue of Liberty Arm & Torch created from discarded toys.

The Great Friend to Kids Award was initiated in 1991 by the Association of Children’s Museums to honor individuals who have made outstanding contributions toward strengthening education for children. Fred Rogers and Marian Wright Edelman are among the past National Great Friend to Kids Award winners. Please Touch began presenting its own award in 1996 to coincide with the museum’s 20th birthday. Past winners include the Philadelphia Eagles Youth Partnership; Sheryl Leach, creator of Barney; Alex Scott, Founder of Alex’s Lemonade Stand; the Phillie Phanatic; the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program; Carolyn Johnson, Founder and Executive Director of the National Adoption Center; NBA All-Star Dikembe Mutombo; Carter and Pat Merbreier of *Captain Noah and His Magical Ark*, among others.

Sponsorship opportunities, individual tickets and program book ads are available. Tickets start at \$150. For information or to purchase tickets, contact Laura Stanley at 215-581-3160 or lstanley@pleasetouchmuseum.org.

More about the 2010 winners...

Neha Gupta, Yardley, PA

Neha Gupta is the 14-year-old founder of Empower Orphans, a non-profit organization helping orphaned and underprivileged children in northern India. Neha began her efforts in 2005, at the age of 9, after visiting an orphanage on a trip to India to visit her grandparents. Seeing the conditions the local children were living in was a call to action for Neha and she set out to make a difference in the lives of orphaned children. She started by selling Indian wine charms and greeting cards and soliciting donations from her community. To date, Neha and Empower Orphans have raised over

\$32,000 for the children of the Bal Kunj Orphanage and the Shree Geeta Public School in YamunaNagar, India. The funds have been used to start a library, provide meals, clothes, shoes and blankets to underprivileged children and to conduct vision and dental clinics for over 360 kids. Neha has also provided older children with technical books and sewing machines to help them learn a trade, earn a living, and become more independent. In 2010, Neha opened a computer center with four computers, another library for 360 kids, sponsored the education of 40 children and will provide 30 more girls with sewing machines.

Locally, Neha has worked with Christ's Home for Children in Warminster where she provided 175 CFL bulbs in an effort to reduce costs for the orphanage and allow them to utilize funds towards improved care for children. By the end of 2010, she plans to provide bicycles for the children at the orphanage. Additionally, Neha works with Mission Kids Center in Norristown where soon she will be distributing stuffed animals to children that visit the center. She has won numerous awards for her efforts, including: Gold Level, President's Volunteer Service Award; 2nd Prize for Wachovia's 2008 National Philanthropic Award; Bronze Medal for the Prudential Spirit of Community Award; Philadelphia 76ers Hometown Hero Award; as well as becoming a finalist for the Philadelphia Inquirer's 2008 and 2009 Citizen of the Year.

Marianne Raphaely, *Cherry Hill, NJ*

Marianne Raphaely is a devoted community activist involved in education, the arts, medicine and science. She has spent her life serving children, first as a grammar school teacher and then in roles as a librarian, playground supervisor, recreation director and PTA member. She served nine years on the Cherry Hill Board of Education and 14 years on the Camden County Technical School Board. Currently serving on Please Touch Museum's Board of Directors, she has also volunteered her time on the board and committees of cultural organizations like the Opera Company of Philadelphia, the Franklin Institute and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Through her service and philanthropy she has stressed the importance of making cultural opportunities available to schoolchildren. While serving as a board member for the Rock School for Dance Education, Ms. Raphaely helped to create and bestow scholarships for talented, disadvantaged dance students. Ms. Raphaely is currently chairman to the Philadelphia Orchestra's New Jersey Committee, President of Friends of Coriell Institute Medical Research, and President of the Auxiliary of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She has also served as chair of the City of Philadelphia's Art in City Hall exhibition program and co-chair to the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts invitation committee.

Simon's Fund, *Plymouth Meeting, PA*

Simon's Fund, a non-profit organization formed with the goal of testing children for congenital heart defects and increasing awareness about sudden cardiac arrest, was founded by Darren and Phyllis Sudman. After the passing of their infant son, Simon, Mr. and Mrs. Sudman were determined to spare other families the pain they experienced and began their journey with a clear mission to "save a child's life...and then another." To date, Simon's Fund has organized and executed multiple free EKG screenings throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania and over 1,500 children have had their hearts checked as a result of the Sudmans' efforts. Simon's Fund also works with legislators, pediatricians and researchers to raise awareness about congenital heart defects and recently launched an ambitious campaign with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Dr. Victoria Vetter to screen 100,000 children across the U.S. for cardiac abnormalities. The Sudmans and Simon's Fund have already pledged \$250,000 for the effort and hope to achieve mandatory EKG screenings for every child in the U.S.

Reverend Floyd L. White, III, *Camden, NJ*

Rev. Floyd White is Pastor of the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church and President of the Woodland Community Development Corporation in Camden, NJ. He is receiving the Great Friend to Kids award for his diligent work in Camden's Morgan Village community and his work with at-risk youth in the city. Over the past two decades, Rev. White has established the Anna B. Clark Summer Day Camp and Mary Esther Williams Homework Centers to help children improve in academics and realize their potential outside of what they see in their community. These programs serve the youth in three Camden City schools providing tutoring services and recreational activities, all free of charge.

Rev. White has also established the Adopt-A-Family program to provide meals and toys to children and their families during the holiday seasons. He has partnered with countless organizations to help make Morgan Village a safer place

for the children in the community. Rev. White is also currently working on combating childhood obesity by creating a community garden program that will provide fresh vegetables for families to take home due to the lack of grocery stores in the community. While his main focus is on younger children, Rev. White also helps youth ages 14-18 find summer jobs to keep them off the street and teach them valuable work skills. He also created the College Prep Program for Camden's 11th graders, providing them with eight-week Kaplan SAT prep courses along with financial aid and college admission workshops to help improve their chances of getting into college. Despite being involved in all of these programs, Rev. White still manages to hold positions on several committees in Camden County where he continues to advocate for youth.

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Please Touch Museum® at Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park is dedicated to enriching the lives of children by providing learning opportunities through play. Recognized locally and nationally as one of the best children's museums, Please Touch is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-581-3181, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.