

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2007

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## **PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM SEEKS USED TOYS TO BE PART OF 40-FOOT-TALL TOY SCULPTURE**

Toy donations may be dropped off at the museum and area  
Five Below stores beginning Saturday, May 12

**PHILADELPHIA** -- Is your attic, garage, or basement overflowing with old toys that your kids (and the kid in you) have outgrown? Please Touch Museum, the children's museum of Philadelphia, can help you clear some space this spring while creating an opportunity for these idle toys to take part in an incredible art project that will bring joy to generations of kids.

As part of the museum's renovation and expansion of its new home at historic Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park, Please Touch is creating a huge 'monument to fun' made out of toys. As visitors enter the Great Hall, a stunning space crowned by a soaring dome, they will encounter a 40-foot replica of the Statue of Liberty's Arm and Torch. In true Please Touch Museum fashion this sculpture will be created out of toys, games and other 'found objects'—wood, plastic and metal—gathered and assembled by Philadelphia artist Leo Sewell. The subject matter holds a special place in Memorial Hall's history: The original Statue of Liberty Arm and Torch was displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, the world's fair for which Memorial Hall was built, as part of a fundraising effort. Cash donations were collected in Philadelphia from May to September 1876, to help fund the pedestal that now holds the full statue in New York Harbor.

"I cannot think of a more fun way to do some spring cleaning than to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime project," said Nancy D. Kolb, Please Touch Museum's President and CEO. "Give us your tired, your worn, your huddled masses of toys and Leo Sewell will give them a new life as part of this amazing monument, which will greet generations of visitors to the new Please Touch Museum at Memorial Hall." The artist is seeking non-plush toys measuring at least one foot and weighing less than 20 pounds. The toys are being collected at the museum and at 14 participating Five Below stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware from Saturday, May 12 through Friday, May 25. A complete list of participating locations is available at [www.pleasetouchmuseum.org](http://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org).

"We are very proud to help Please Touch Museum gather the toys and games needed to build this fun sculpture," said David Schlessinger, founder of Five Below. "My sons, as well as my partner Tom Vellios' sons, grew up visiting Please Touch Museum and marveling at the Leo Sewell sculpture there. This drive is a great way for our pre-teen and teen customers to recycle some of the toys they may have outgrown while learning about a really cool form of art. We can't wait to see how this project turns out, and Five Below intends to donate a lot of toys to the project, too."

Leo Sewell is no stranger to Please Touch Museum. He is the creator of "Artie," the popular life-sized elephant sculpted from hundreds of discarded playthings, including a youth football helmet, a 1960s era

Batmobile, Smurfs, a Spider-Man action figure, and a red Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robot (sans his blue opponent). Sewell, who says he “grew up near a dump,” has played with junk now for 40 years, and has developed his own assemblage technique. His works are collected by corporations, museums, and individuals throughout the world. Leo continues to cull the refuse of Philadelphia out of which he fashions pieces of all sizes, from a life-sized housecat to a 24-foot stegosaurus. His sculptures have appeared on Captain Noah and Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, and are a favorite at Ripley's Believe It or Not Museums in 23 cities worldwide. For more details on his work, visit [www.leosewell.net](http://www.leosewell.net).

Please Touch Museum at Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park is scheduled to open in the fall of 2008. Memorial Hall, built for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition and original home to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, will provide a truly unique children's museum with 36,000 square feet of new exhibits (more than triple the current 11,000), a newly restored carousel, new exhibits, parking and a restaurant. Artwork like the Liberty Torch within the new Please Touch Museum will help children see the world in new ways and inspire their creativity. All of the artwork appearing at Memorial Hall will be seamlessly integrated with the exhibits and will support the museum's mission themes of parent-child interaction, open-ended role playing and learning through play.

#### **About the Statue of Liberty's visit to Philadelphia**

Sculptor Frederic Auguste Bartholdi was commissioned to design a sculpture with the year 1876 in mind for completion, to commemorate the centennial of the American Declaration of Independence. The Statue of Liberty was a joint effort between America and France and it was agreed upon that the American people were to build the pedestal, and the French people were responsible for the Statue and its assembly here in the United States. However, lack of funds was a problem on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In the United States, benefit theatrical events, art exhibitions, auctions and prize fights assisted in providing needed funds. The Centennial Exhibition, staged to mark the 100th anniversary of American independence, was an ideal event to raise funds for the project. Financing for the pedestal was completed in August 1885, and pedestal construction was finished in April of 1886. On October 28, 1886, the dedication of the Statue of Liberty took place in front of thousands of spectators. She was a centennial gift ten years late.

#### **About Five Below**

Five Below is a new retail concept positioned to become the leading extreme-value retailer to the teen market and beyond. Five Below offers thousands of trend-right products for teens, as well as pre-teens and other value-minded consumers, all of which are priced from \$1.00 to \$5.00. Five Below was founded by David Schlessinger, creator and founder of Encore Books and Zany Brainy along with Tom Vellios, former CEO of Zany Brainy.

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Please Touch Museum® 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 seven days a week from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$9.95 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-963-0667, or visit [www.pleasetouchmuseum.org](http://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org).