

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STUDENTS FROM PHILADELPHIA'S MURAL ARTS PROGRAM CREATE 25 PORTRAITS
FOR THE NEW PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM AT MEMORIAL HALL**

PHILADELPHIA, PA (August 7, 2007) – Please Touch Museum®, the Children's Museum of Philadelphia, today unveiled a series of 25 portraits that will be exhibited inside the new museum at Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park. The acrylic on panel paintings, each measuring 24 x 24 inches, were painted by Philadelphia teenagers enrolled in Mural Corps, an after-school art education program of the city's renowned Mural Arts Program. The portraits depict young members of Please Touch Museum and residents of the Parkside neighborhood near Memorial Hall. The portraits will be placed on view on the ground floor of the new museum when it opens in fall 2008.

"It is a great pleasure to partner with the Mural Arts Program, which has been transforming neighborhoods in Philadelphia for more than two decades by creating inspirational works of public art that have a lasting community impact," said Nancy Kolb, President and CEO of Please Touch Museum. "These fabulous paintings by the talented young artists of Mural Corps will engage and inspire museum visitors and create a link between our present members and our future Parkside neighbors. I look forward to the day everyone involved in this project can visit the museum and say 'That's me' or 'I painted that.'"

"I am thrilled that our young Mural Corps artists have been given an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the renaissance of Memorial Hall," said Jane Golden, founder and director of the Mural Arts Program. "Please Touch Museum's move to this neighborhood will be a great source of pride in the Parkside community, where Mural Arts Program is pleased to have worked for many years."

The project marks the first time the Mural Corps artists received a paid commission for their work. The student artists trained and worked under the direction of Eric Okdeh, a Philadelphia artist who has painted numerous murals around the city. Mural Corps, one of the Mural Arts Program's after-school initiatives, is an arts education program designed to engage high-school age youth (between the ages of 14 and 21) in the mural-making process. Many students in the Mural Corps are graduates of the Big Picture program, a year-long mural-training opportunity for youth between the ages of 10 and 18. Experienced artists and educators teach lessons about Philadelphia murals, and each summer, all Big Picture students have the opportunity to work with a professional muralist on a large-scale mural. Students who demonstrate talent and commitment in their portfolios can move up to Mural Corps, which is designed to increase educational opportunities and to provide critical job skills.

The student artists are:

Dameer Clinton, 15, of John Bartram High School
Calen Credle, 17, of Charter High School for Architecture and Design (CHAD)
Doris Dawa, 17, of Horace Furness High School
Briana Dawkins, 17, of Charter High School for Architecture and Design (CHAD)
Shemise Evans, 16, of High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA)
Carl Scott, 17, of Simon Gratz High School
Drew Scott, 16, of Simon Gratz High School
David Swartz, 17, of High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA)
Wilson Thomas, 16, of Benjamin Franklin High School

About the Mural Arts Program

The Mural Arts Program (MAP) is the nation's largest mural program. Since 1984, MAP has created over 2,800 murals and works of public art, which are now part of Philadelphia's civic landscape and a source of inspiration to the thousands of residents and visitors who encounter them, earning Philadelphia international recognition as the "City of Murals." MAP engages over 100 communities each year in the transformation of neighborhoods through the mural-making process. MAP's award-winning, free art education programs annually serve over 3,000 youth at sites throughout the city and at-risk teens through education outreach programs. MAP also serves adult offenders in local prisons and rehabilitation centers, using the restorative power of art to break the cycle of crime and violence in our communities. For further information, call (215) 685-0750 or visit www.muralarts.org.

About Please Touch Museum at Memorial Hall

One of America's first examples of Beaux-Arts architecture, Memorial Hall was constructed to be the Art Gallery of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, the 100th birthday celebration of the United States. It served as the city's art museum until the Philadelphia Museum of Art opened in 1928, and was later the home of the Fairmount Park Commission. It had fallen into disrepair in recent years, but is currently being restored to serve as the new location for Please Touch Museum, scheduled to open in fall 2008. Memorial Hall 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. 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.