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Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund Museum Partnership *Museum sets 'gold standard' for energy efficiency, leading by example in concepts it teaches children*

April 27, 2011, New Britain, Conn. – Perhaps nowhere is the idea of leading by example better exemplified than in the honor conferred last week on the Stepping Stones Museum for Children in Norwalk.

The design, construction and operational innovations for which the museum was awarded a Gold Certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) serve as perfect illustrations of the conservation concepts that the educational facility continually conveys to both its youthful visitors and kids throughout the state.

Stepping Stones has worked in close partnership with the Energy Efficiency Fund and staff members of Connecticut Light & Power in the development of both the energy-efficient features that are part of LEED's qualifications and its exhibits aimed at familiarizing kids with the various ways we can reduce our energy use. An interactive new Energy Lab Gallery and the popular mini "Conservation Quest" exhibit that annually tours over 25 schools, libraries and nature centers are its most noteworthy contributions to such ongoing energy-efficiency education.

The plaque, presented by the United States Green Building Council, is an official acknowledgment that the Stepping Stones Museum is one of just three public buildings in the entire state to receive LEED Gold Certification—which signifies that a building meets all nationally recognized performance standards. These standards encompass such factors as energy savings, reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, water-use efficiency, indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources.

In addition to its solar panels, "green" roof, wind turbine and the recycled building materials it uses, the private nonprofit museum earned its certification through features that include:

- high efficiency heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment, complete with variable-frequency drives;
- energy-efficient lighting technologies, such as compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs and light-emitting diodes (LEDs), including installation of 70 “Color Blaster” LED lights in the Energy Lab Gallery and the museum’s Celebration Courtyard;
- a high efficiency natural gas condensing boiler, and
- high efficiency motors.

Taken together, these energy-saving technologies should enable Stepping Stones to save an estimated 1.1 million kilowatt-hours of electricity and approximately 3.2 million cubic feet of natural gas over the lifetime of the equipment. That roughly translates into more than 9,527 tons of carbon dioxide not released into the atmosphere.

“There is perhaps no better legacy we can leave to tomorrow’s generation than the outstanding collection of sustainability training tools devised by Stepping Stones,” noted Energy Efficiency Fund Chairman Richard W. Steeves. But perhaps the best demonstrations the museum has provided of the practicality of energy conservation techniques are in the design and operational features that brought it this distinction.”

The museum’s new 1,500-square-foot Energy Lab offers intriguing interactive ways for youngsters to learn about and experience the power of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and water, as well as the chance to crawl beneath a simulation of the earth’s surface to “discover” the origins and limitations of fossil fuels. The exhibits have been specially designed to stimulate kids’ natural sense of curiosity. Throughout the museum, visitors can find placards indicating the facility’s environmental stewardship attributes, including: CFL and LED lighting installations, solar panel array, local sources for building materials and the museum’s green roof.

The traveling Conservation Quest mini-exhibit, introduced by Stepping Stones in 2008 as part of the “One Thing Expo” in Hartford, features more than 15 hands-on activities and programs, including one in which students can compare the amount of energy used by incandescent, CFL and LED bulbs and another that shows them how the photovoltaic cells in solar panels change sunlight into electricity that can power various electronic gadgets.

The museum, in conjunction with the Rainforest Alliance, will also be conducting a “Youth Voice on Climate Change” forum from 3 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, May 1, in the facility’s multimedia gallery. The event, co-sponsored by the Energy Efficiency Fund and Betsy and Jesse Fink Foundation, will feature various interactive activities as well as a panel discussion by area students focusing on what local young people are learning, thinking and doing about this looming global crisis. Admission is free, but reservations are required by calling Stepping Stones at (203) 899-0606, ext. 240.

The Gold LEED certification award was also acknowledged in an official proclamation from Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, in which Stepping Stones was named Connecticut's "greenest museum." The facility, Malloy noted, "has demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting Connecticut's air, land and water for future generations" and by earning a LEED Gold Certification, has now "brought the state that much closer to becoming a healthier, greener community."

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About the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund

The Energy Efficiency Fund promotes efficient energy use, helps residents and businesses save on their electric and natural gas bills, advances economic development, reduces electric demand, and helps reduce air pollution. Energy Efficiency Fund programs serve residential customers, including limited-and fixed-income customers, as well as business and municipal customers. Connecticut's energy efficiency programs are funded by a charge on customers' utility bills and administered by the state's electric and gas utilities including: Connecticut Light and Power Company, The United Illuminating, Yankee Gas, Connecticut Natural Gas, and Southern Connecticut Gas. Additional information on Connecticut's energy efficiency programs can be found at www.ctenergyinfo.com or by calling 1-877-WISE-USE.