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Major Gift Founds the **Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment at MPM,** Funds Multiple New Initiatives

Milwaukee—January 12, 2015—The Milwaukee Public Museum (MPM) announced today that Christine Rundblad, a recently-appointed MPM Board Member and long-time museum volunteer, has made a landmark individual gift of one million dollars to MPM to found the **Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment at the Milwaukee Public Museum.**

The mission of the **Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment at MPM** is to advance scientific research especially as related to collections, public knowledge, and community involvement that contribute to the better understanding and conservation of Wisconsin's environment and biological resources.

Ms. Rundblad, who joined the Museum's Board of Directors in 2014, said in making the gift:

"I have been a volunteer at MPM for years and still, every time I walk in the door, learn something new. This gift is a way of honoring my experience at the Museum and helping support its important scientific mission. I am very eager to watch all that will unfold from the founding of the Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment as it becomes established at MPM and within Wisconsin."

MPM's Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment (CWBE) is an innovative, cross-museum scientific effort that brings together academic research, programs, exhibitions, and citizen science with the more than 4 million scientific and cultural specimens held by MPM. Moving beyond the traditional categories of collections and scientific disciplines (vertebrate and invertebrate zoology, botany, anthropology, geology, etc.) the **Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment** establishes MPM as one of just a few major museums in the country to organize its efforts across disciplines to reflect the way contemporary scientific research is pursued. This cross-disciplinary pursuit of knowledge is perfectly aligned with

MPM's collections and resources, allowing the **CWBE** to conduct research and launch projects that explore Wisconsin's changing natural resources, climate and environment.

"As Wisconsin's only major natural science museum, MPM is a leader in building the scientific literacy of the public and in informing broad public discussion of the major issues of our generation. The founding of this innovative Center—a new way for MPM to structure itself around what may be the most important scientific question of our age— is a major step forward for science in Wisconsin. Whether you are a farmer, a foodie, a hunter, a fisherman, or use a local park or enjoy summers on a local lake, you are intimately connected to the health and vibrancy of Wisconsin's environment."

--MPM President and CEO Dennis Kois

Partner organizations already onboard the Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment include **Marquette University, the City of Milwaukee Sustainability Office, the MMSD, the Milwaukee County Parks System, Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch College, Mount Mary University, and UWM's School of Letters & Science.**

Museum President and CEO Dennis Kois announced that among the initial funded projects launching as part of the **Center for Wisconsin Biodiversity and Environment** are:

- **The Wisconsin BioBlitz project**, which partners MPM with community organizations, university researchers, and other organizations to survey the biodiversity of urban parks during 24-hour species counts. MPM's BioBlitz takes science out of the lab to provide the community the opportunity to discover the variety of species – from plants to invertebrates – living in their own backyard as well as inspire a new generation of scientists. Each BioBlitz also adds specimens and new scientific knowledge to the 170-year-long history of native collections and data held by MPM. The first MPM BioBlitz took place this past summer at the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center, and the second will take place at Milwaukee County's Grant Park on the south side in June.
- The new **John J. Brander and Christine E. Rundblad Research Fellowship Program at the Milwaukee Public Museum**, which will bring scientific faculty from partner and other universities to MPM to undertake original scientific research using MPM collections, as well as support the dissemination of new science. These competitive, paid fellowships will bring 30-40 scientists to conduct research at MPM over the coming decade; research that will then be shared with the public via exhibits, programs, and publications. The Brander/Rundblad Fellowship will offer increased stipends to scientists and science faculty of color, who are vastly under-represented in the field. The

fellowship is co-named after Ms. Rundblad's late husband, John J. Brander, who was a Milwaukee-area entrepreneur and business owner. For more information on the Fellowship and how to apply go to <http://www.mpm.edu/researchfellows>.

- A **pioneering crowd-sourced digitization project** that has the goal of making 75,000 MPM collection objects publicly accessible to facilitate research and public knowledge over the next two years. Among just a few such crowd-sourced efforts undertaken by a U.S. museum, this digitization effort will initially focus on MPM's valuable biology collections, nearly all of which were collected in Wisconsin over the past 170 years and thus provide an irreplaceable trove of scientific data about the State. The Museum will be raising additional funds to expand this project over time, with the goal of ultimately making all relevant scientific collections accessible digitally as part of the CWBE.
- The funding of three years worth of **innovative education and natural science** programs oriented around adult education and intergenerational family-learning, led by MPM's newly-formed Audience and Community Engagement department. The gift will both support new programs as well as help MPM scale successful programs already underway, such as community pop-up museums, the SPARK! program for patients with dementia or Alzheimer's, and MPM distance learning programs which serve schools in every Wisconsin county. The gift and the CWBE will further cement MPM's role as the informal science education leader in Wisconsin.
- Ms. Rundblad has included a lead gift of \$225,000 for a new exhibit to replace **MPM's Wisconsin Woodlands** permanent exhibition on the second floor. This lead gift allows the museum to pilot the use of new technologies overlaid on historic MPM dioramas, new interpretive and technology strategies, and—most importantly—up-to-date scientific content courtesy of the research and collection undertaken by the **CWBE** and its program partners. With project development and additional fundraising beginning this year, MPM plans to open the new exhibition on Wisconsin's ecology and biodiversity in 2018. The project is expected to have a total budget of approximately \$2 million.
- The gift includes additional components in support of the CWBE, including a gift to the MPM Vision Fund, an initiative launched with the 2014 arrival of President and CEO Dennis Kois to support transformative organizational change at the Museum, a gift in support of publications; and a gift to support the public dissemination of research and science content generated by MPM staff and Brander/Rundblad Fellows.

These are a sampling of the new initiatives made possible by this landmark gift to the Milwaukee Public Museum. To apply for the CWBE fellowship, go to www.mpm.edu/researchfellows.

About the Milwaukee Public Museum

The Milwaukee Public Museum is a natural and human history museum located in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The museum is among the oldest in the United States, with a history dating back to the 1850's. It was chartered in 1882 and opened to the public in 1884. MPM has three floors of exhibits that encompass life-size dioramas, walk-through villages, world cultures, dinosaurs, a rain forest and a live butterfly garden, as well as the Daniel M. Soref National Geographic Theater and Planetarium. The museum houses more than 4 million objects and hosts nearly half a million visitors each year, making it the most visited museum, of any type, in the State.

MPM is operated by Milwaukee Public Museum, Inc., a private, non-profit organization, and its building and collections are owned and supported by Milwaukee County for the benefit of the public.

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