



Media Contacts:

Rebecca Schejbal, Museums In the Park
312-447-0460, rschejbal@museumsinthepark.org

Kate Young, PCI
312-558-1770, kyoung@pci-pr.com

**ATTENDANCE STRONG AT CHICAGO-AREA
MUSEUMS AND ZOOS DESPITE RECESSION**

*Public utilizing benefits and value offered by world-class organizations
involved in Museums Work for Chicago campaign*

CHICAGO – Jan. 27, 2010 – During difficult economic times, people often turn to community anchors, including museums and zoos, as a resource for family fun and educational experiences. That certainly occurred in 2009, when 14.8 million people visited 14 Chicago-area museums and zoos, reflecting a 7 percent increase in attendance over 2008.

The 14 museums and zoos collaborating on the [Museums Work for Chicago](#) public awareness campaign include the 10 museums that comprise [Museums In the Park](#) (MIP) plus partnering organizations Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Children’s Museum, Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo and Lincoln Park Zoo. The collaboration formed to showcase the contributions museums and zoos make to the region and to raise public awareness of how they contribute economically and educationally to city, metropolitan area and state residents.

Overall attendance at the 10 MIP organizations totaled 8.3 million in 2009, a 9 percent increase over 2008. The John G. Shedd Aquarium remained the highest attended organization with 1.9 million visitors. The Art Institute of Chicago, which opened its Modern Wing last May and experienced a 32 percent increase, drew 1.8 million visitors, and the Museum of Science and Industry rounded out the top three with 1.6 million visitors.

Lincoln Park Zoo, which is free, led the way for the partner organizations with an estimated attendance of 3 million, and Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo followed with near-record attendance of 2.2 million in its 75th anniversary year. Attendance at the four partner museums and zoos was a combined 6.5 million in 2009, up 4 percent from 2008.

“We are encouraged that, even in these tough economic times, the attendance gains demonstrate that families see the incredible value that Chicago’s world-class museums and zoos offer,” said Gary T. Johnson, president of the Chicago History Museum and president of Museums In the Park. “When times are tough, people want to connect with something that matters in life. Our strong attendance numbers show that museums are meeting that need. In addition to offering fun, engaging and educational experiences for visitors, our museums and zoos are key economic engines, generating jobs and tax revenues that are vital to growing our economy.”

-more-

Free-day visits at the 14 museums and zoos showed a significant gain – up 24 percent in 2009, with more than 1.4 million people taking advantage of free-day programming. More than 1.5 million students visited the museums and zoos in 2009, 88 percent of whom visited free of charge. Johnson said Chicago’s 14 world-class organizations are continually offering new opportunities for students to benefit from the extensive educational resources museums provide through web-based programs, remote learning labs, teacher training and other offerings designed to advance classroom learning.

“We invest heavily in providing educational opportunities for students, and we are an increasingly important educational resource to people in the Chicago area as well as in Illinois and to visitors from around the world,” said Johnson, adding that museums and zoos continue to offer unrivaled exhibitions and programs despite working to do more with shrinking budgets. “Every organization has made very difficult budget decisions in the last two years, but our goal remains to provide visitors with extraordinary, quality experiences.”

The 14 [Museums Work For Chicago](#) museums and zoos are: Adler Planetarium, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Children’s Museum, Chicago History Museum, Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo, DuSable Museum of African American History, The Field Museum, Lincoln Park Zoo, Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Science and Industry, National Museum of Mexican Art, The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, and John G. Shedd Aquarium.

###