



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Note to Editors:** Photos from Groundbreaking event and other visuals available at <http://steppingstonesmuseum.org/press-photos/expansion>. Photo identification is listed below.

### **Stepping Stones Museum for Children Marks Official Start of its Expansion Project with Groundbreaking Event** *Families, Community Partners and Business Leaders Join in Community Celebration*

Norwalk, CT (March 14, 2009) — Stepping Stones Museum for Children, a private non-profit organization, hosted a community Groundbreaking Celebration today. This momentous event marked the official start of the museum's \$15 million environmentally-focused expansion project,\* led by Beinfield Architecture and a host of design partners, that will allow the museum to realize its vision for 2010 and beyond.

The event included the unveiling of a children's community mural created by 168 local elementary school children; touch-a-truck educational opportunities for children; a preview of the expansion model; a musical performance by Patrick Sweeney of the Sweeney Tots; and a giant birthday cake in celebration of the museum's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday. Families, board members, community partners, business leaders, the design team, museum staff and Norwalk Mayor Richard A. Moccia participated in the Groundbreaking Ceremony.

"This groundbreaking celebration demonstrated the many ways that our museum and the community are growing together," said Rhonda Kiest, executive director, Stepping Stones Museum for Children. "It was the first of many celebrations over the next 18 months as the museum grows and continues to be a strong educational resource for children, families, schools and the community at large."

"Today we saw yet another positive example of what can be achieved when everyone in the community works together toward a common goal," said Norwalk Mayor Moccia. "This could not have been possible without the continued dialogue, commitment and collaboration among city groups, residents, and business and community leaders."

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Following today's event, construction will get under way and is scheduled for completion by the end of December 2010.

“This expansion project is an important milestone for the museum,” said House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero, Jr. “It is also a powerful symbol of growth and innovation for the city of Norwalk, its surrounding communities and the state of Connecticut as a whole.”

Cafero noted that among the most significant aspects of this project is the creation of a pedestrian link between downtown Norwalk and Mathews Park and the park’s cultural institutions, including Stepping Stones Museum for Children, Lockwood-Mathews Mansion and the Center for Contemporary Printmaking.

Additionally, other notable elements of the expansion are plans for energy-themed exhibits, programs, classes and special events.

“The museum’s focus on energy-themed education is a concept we [the city and state] fully support,” said State Senator Bob Duff (D-Norwalk). “If children embrace the powerful idea of conservation—and understand their role in protecting the environment—they will become lifelong environmental stewards and perpetuate these values throughout the course of their lives.”

“The ‘learning journey’ for children begins long before they enter school and extends far beyond their years in higher education,” said State Representative Chris Perone (D-Norwalk). “Stepping Stones new phase of development will offer an even greater array of opportunities for youth to learn and grow, preparing them to be a part of a highly competent future workforce.”

**Stepping Stones Museum for Children**, a 501(c)(3) private non-profit, is an award-winning children’s museum committed to broadening and enriching the lives of children. Museum exhibits, educational programs and special events complement efforts in schools, childcare centers and homes. With four main galleries, a toddlers-only gallery and more than 100 hands-on activities, Stepping Stones offers children ten and under plenty to explore and discover. To learn more, visit [steppingstonesmuseum.org](http://steppingstonesmuseum.org).

**Beinfield Architecture PC** is an award-winning, full-service architecture firm founded in 1983 with offices located in the heart of historic South Norwalk, Connecticut. Over the last 20 years, they have received over 50 design awards, a testament to the creativity, care, and professionalism that go into all of their projects. Beinfield Architecture is dedicated to solving architectural problems innovatively with environmentally sustainable solutions that are simple and direct, expressive of structure and program, and supportive of the varied patterns of human life. Their work spans a wide variety of project types, some of which you can view at: [www.beinfieldarchitecture.com](http://www.beinfieldarchitecture.com).

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**Pictured left to right:**

**OA6Poo37.JPG**

Ammie Suarez, 5, Norwalk, from Marvin Elementary School

**OA6Po366.JPG**

Marissa Miller, 4, Weston

Sasha Meink, 7, Norwalk

Ryan Smith, 6, Greenwich

Brian Johnson Simeone, 3, Stamford

Ammie Suarez, 5, Norwalk

Rhonda Kiest, executive director of Stepping Stones

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Robert Cavello, Westview Group LLC, Norwalk  
Senator Toni Boucher (R-26<sup>th</sup> District)  
John Foster, chair of Stepping Stones Board of Directors  
Rhonda Kiest, executive director of Stepping Stones  
State Representative Chris Perone (D-137<sup>th</sup> District)  
Mayor Richard A. Moccia, Norwalk  
Bruce Beinfield, Beinfield Architecture, Norwalk  
Senator Bob Duff (D-25<sup>th</sup> District)  
Gus Pappajohn, A. Pappajohn Company, Norwalk

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Rhonda Kiest, executive director of Stepping Stones  
Mayor Richard A. Moccia, Norwalk  
John Foster, chair of Stepping Stones Board of Directors

**\*About Stepping Stones Museum for Children's Expansion:**

*Stepping Stones Museum for Children's \$15 million expansion will include the addition of 22,000 square feet to the east side of the building in Mathews Park, the addition of new exhibits and program space with a focus on energy-themed education. Outdoor features will include an enhanced courtyard with a tensile structure for year-round programming, a lush community garden for visitors to explore the natural world and kinetic sculptures that introduce renewable energy sources and energy generation principles. The expanded facility will be Gold LEED Certified\*\* and include solar panels, a wind turbine and a green-planted roof.*

**\*\*About LEED Certification:**

*Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), LEED provides a comprehensive system of standards for environmentally sound practices across all aspects of development and construction.*

*LEED status is given in four categories—Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum—which address six major areas: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation and design process. When a building is submitted for certification, points are awarded for compliance in these areas.*