

Northwestern Mutual and Betty Brinn Children's Museum Debut Word Headquarters Exhibit on February 14

Exhibit will provide new interactive resource for literacy development

MILWAUKEE, Jan. 15, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- On February 14, the Betty Brinn Children's Museum will debut *Word Headquarters*, a new feature exhibit sponsored by the Northwestern Mutual Foundation that highlights literacy as the key to a child's academic and lifelong success, and reflects a commitment to early childhood education and school readiness.

Word Headquarters is a busy pretend global communications company where employees are hard at work learning to listen, share, read, write, perform and create. In addition to fun and engaging activities that support the development of early learners and emerging readers, *Word Headquarters* provides easy-to-use tips and tools designed to help adults foster their child's development of critical skills. The exhibit's educational content reflects developmental milestones established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, as well as Wisconsin and national academic standards for early learners and school-age children, and was developed by the Betty Brinn Children's Museum in collaboration with faculty from Marquette University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"Reading enables children to have a brighter future by providing them a foundation upon which they can build for success," said John Kordsmeier, president, Northwestern Mutual Foundation. "Children who are not proficient in reading at third grade are more likely to leave school before graduating than proficient readers. This new exhibit will allow children to advance and grow fundamental skills during a critical point in their educational development."

Word Headquarters will encourage children and adults to have fun as they explore the building blocks of literacy – hundreds of tiles will feature letters, sight words, prefixes and suffixes, punctuation, symbols, pictograms and more. As the tiles are sorted in the exhibit's mechanical, kid-powered "production center," visitors can produce an endless number of words, sentences, stories, songs and other forms of self-expression; build messages at workstations; play a variety of larger-than-life word games; solve literacy problems; or send messages to coworkers using the exhibit's overhead pulley system. A "concept of the month" will be used to introduce additional activities throughout the year that offer an endless variety of new challenges.

The "corner office," "communications center" and "shipping and receiving area" will all expand on basic literacy concepts by featuring interactive activities, including a blog station, performance space, audio book station, literacy-themed trivia, reading centers and more. Exhibit messages will guide adults about ways to help develop a child's print awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonetic and phonological awareness, visual and spoken vocabulary, narrative skills, recognition of genres, reading comprehension and more.

Word Headquarters has specifically been developed for the space adjacent to *Be A Maker*, the Museum's popular communal workshop that invites children and adults to work together on a broad range of do-it-yourself projects that promote science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education. *Word Headquarters* and *Be A Maker* will share a visual communication activity inspired by the work of graphic designer and author Chip Kidd. The design station will offer children the opportunity to experiment with color, scale, typeface and images that create a visual message, underscoring the important connections that exist between literacy and STEM.

The exhibit is free with Museum admission. The Museum is open Monday – Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sundays from noon until 5 p.m. Museum admission is \$8 per person and \$7 per senior (adults older than 55); children younger than 1 are free. More information is available at www.bbcmkids.org or by calling 414-390-KIDS (5437).

About the Betty Brinn Children's Museum

The Betty Brinn Children's Museum is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational resources that promote the healthy development of children in their formative years – from birth to age 10. The Museum's mission is supported by the development of age-appropriate, hands-on exhibits and programs for children, and adult education programs that focus on early childhood brain development, learning styles, parenting skills and how the Museum environment can be used to promote a young child's cognitive, emotional, social and physical growth.

About Northwestern Mutual Foundation

The mission of the Northwestern Mutual Foundation is to improve the lives of children and families in need. The Foundation has given nearly \$270 million since its inception in 1992 and is designed to create lasting impact in the communities where the company's employees and financial representatives live and work. We accomplish this by combining financial support, volunteerism, thought leadership and convening community partners to deliver the best outcomes. Our efforts are focused nationally on curing childhood cancer, and locally on education, neighborhoods and making our hometown of Milwaukee a great destination.

About Northwestern Mutual

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For further information: Elizabeth DeLuca, 1-800-323-7033, mediarelations@northwesternmutual.com; or Michele Duranso, Communications Manager, 414-390-KIDS (5437), mduranso@bbcmkids.org

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