

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Historic Star Projector To Be Retired To Make Way For SciDome Technology**

West Hartford, CT (September 13, 2007) On September 15 from 6:00 to 9:00PM, The Children's Museum's adult members and friends will celebrate almost 40 years of service by the Gengras Planetarium's original star projector. "Stella," as she is affectionately known, is a Spitz Space Transit Projector (STP) built by Spitz, Inc., in 1968. She is one of only eleven STPs that were ever made, and one of a few still in service. While her stars still shine brightly, it is time for a well deserved retirement, as she has served our community well.

After Stella's last program on September 16, the Gengras Planetarium will be closed until October 6 when it will reopen as the Travelers Science Dome at the Gengras Planetarium. Stella will be carefully dismantled by Pielock Planetarium Repair and temporarily placed in storage. The Children's Museum hopes to eventually put her on display as a reminder of her long history in the Gengras Planetarium.

The star projector will be replaced with a SciDome system, manufactured by E & S Spitz, Inc. of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. SciDome uses a single fisheye lens and a powerful computer processor to project a seamless video image on the 40-foot dome. This enables the operators to present real-time three dimensional space simulations and fulldome multimedia shows. The technology enables the Museum to expand its programming beyond astronomy and space science to include biology, oceans, dinosaurs, geology, meteorology, and even the arts. The upgrade will make the Museum's planetarium one of the most advanced in New England.

In June 2007 Travelers awarded The Children's Museum a \$236,000 grant to upgrade the technology in the Gengras Planetarium. The award was announced by Museum Trustee, Robert Brody, Senior Vice President of Risk Control at Travelers, at the Museum's 11<sup>th</sup> annual gala last June 8.

According to Marlene Ibsen, president of Travelers Connecticut Foundation, company officials visited Spitz and were presented with a demonstration of the system. They were impressed with the educational value the technology would bring to the region, "As a funder, it seemed like a great opportunity to help the community obtain a unique and important educational asset. We are pleased to help The Children's Museum and the Gengras Planetarium continue their important science mission to young children."

The Travelers Science Dome at the Gengras Planetarium will retain the ability to present traditional slide-based programming to school groups, when appropriate. A full schedule of fulldome shows for both school and public audiences in October are :

- "*Oasis in Space*" - a journey through the Solar System from its origins in a cloud of dust to the newly discovered icy bodies near Pluto. All ages will enjoy the search for water in a celestial neighborhood.

- “Zula® Patrol – Under the Weather” - a planetarium adventure with the alien characters from the PBS children’s program. Multo and his fellow scientists are collecting samples of weather from the planet Zula. When their pet Gorga runs away, they must chase him to our Solar System while avoiding the villain Dark Truder and his devious plans.
- “The Secret of the Cardboard Rocket,” - the most popular children’s program, is remixed with 3-D animation from George Lucas’ Skywalker Ranch. Two children fly through the Solar System, led by a talking astronomy book, and visit all the planets before returning to awaken back home.
- “Molecularium – Riding Snowflakes” - introduces us to Oxy, the Oxygen atom, and her friends Hydo and Hydra. They travel and sing across the Universe to investigate how atoms form molecules, polymers, and metals. Then, they shrink down to the atomic level to ride a snowflake as it builds and turns to rain.
- “Astronaut with Ewan McGregor”, - opening January 2008, explores what it takes to be an astronaut. Explore inner and outer space, from floating around the International Space Station to maneuvering through the human body. Discover the perils of space flight as we subject ‘Chad’, the test astronaut, to everything that space has to throw at him.

The addition of the Travelers Science Dome continues the Gengras Planetarium’s tradition of inspiring and educating over a million visitors since 1968. Established in 1927, The Children’s Museum changed its name in 2006 from the Science Center of Connecticut to renew its focus on children under twelve and their families. In addition to the Museum and the Gengras Planetarium, the organization includes the United Technologies Wildlife Sanctuary, Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, CT, and The Children’s Museum Preschool, one of the oldest preschools in the country. The Children’s Museum serves close to 160,000 people annually, is the fifth oldest children’s museum in the country, and is Connecticut’s largest museum. Located at 950 Trout Brook Drive in West Hartford, the Museum is accessible from I-84 Exit 43 and offers free parking. For more information and specific show schedules, visit the website: [www.TheChildrensMuseumCT.org](http://www.TheChildrensMuseumCT.org)