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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Long Island Children's Museum Earns National Certification as
Nature Explore Classroom**

First in New York State to Earn Designation

Nebraska City, Neb. (Sept. 9, 2008) – The Long Island Children's Museum in Garden City, N.Y., became the first institution in New York State to earn the national designation of a "Certified Nature Explore Classroom" for its outdoor exhibit space called Our Backyard.

The national certification places the Long Island Children's Museum in a select circle; only 11 Nature Explore Classrooms have received this designation in the nation. The first Nature Explore Classroom is located in the Tree Adventure attraction at Arbor Day Farm, the Arbor Day Foundation's interactive conservation venue in Nebraska City, Neb.

Nature Explore Classrooms are part of the Nature Explore Program, a collaborative project of the Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation. Developed in response to the growing disconnect between children and nature, Certified Nature Explore Classrooms are designed to help fill the void by educating young children using research-based principles for integrating nature into their daily learning.

These Classrooms offer interactive elements – including climbing structures, musical instruments made of natural materials, wooden blocks, small waterways, and natural materials for building and creating art – that give children important and inspiring nature experiences. While connecting children with nature, such unstructured play and activities are shown to enhance concentration, develop creativity and problem-solving, relieve stress, and improve skills in many areas.

Outdoor classrooms that are designed according to principles described in the Dimensions Foundation's *Learning With Nature Idea Book*, provide staff training, and include parent involvement are eligible to become certified Nature Explore Classrooms.

The *Our Backyard* Nature Explore Classroom at the Long Island Children's Museum is located at 11 Davis Avenue in Garden City. In the new Classroom, children can create visual masterpieces in a nature art area, climb and crawl on structures, build with natural materials, and practice their balance, agility, and creativity in areas designed for music and movement.

The Long Island Children's Museum is part of the Long Island Nature Collaborative for Kids (LINCK). LINCK includes early childhood and environmental educators, landscape architects, health professionals, policymakers and others. The goal of LINCK is to educate the community about the importance of making nature a part of the daily lives of children, to foster collaboration and community support, and to inspire people to create nature-rich learning environments for children. The LINCK collaboration has resulted in the designation of Long Island as a national demonstration site for nature education from the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation.

"The Nature Explore Classroom is the ideal tool to provide children with meaningful connections to nature," said Hillary Olson, director of education at the Long Island Children's Museum. "One of the best aspects of the classroom is that it gives children a positive hands-on experience with nature and the outdoors in a comfortable and familiar setting."

"The Long Island Children's Museum has taken an important leadership role in a profoundly needed initiative to connect young children with nature, setting a wonderful example for education centers across the country," said John Rosenow, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. "Everyone at the Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation appreciate the commitment the Long Island Children's

Museum has made to the Nature Explore program and the role that nature plays in the lives of young children.”

NOTE TO EDITORS: If you would like a photo of the new Certified Nature Explore Classroom at the Long Island Children’s Museum, please contact Maureen Mangan at mmangan@licm.org.

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About the Long Island Children’s Museum: Long Island Children’s Museum (LICM) invites visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to explore freely, discover their passions, and appreciate the communities and world we share. Through interdisciplinary activities, children and adults can share in the excitement of the learning process. LICM is committed to providing an enjoyable museum experience for all of its visitors. All of the museum’s exhibits are wheelchair accessible. Designed for infants through 12 and their grown-ups, LICM is a private, not-for-profit institution chartered by the New York State Board of Regents.

About the Arbor Day Foundation: The Arbor Day Foundation is a nonprofit education organization of nearly one million members, with a mission to inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. More information on the Foundation and its programs can be found at arborday.org.

About Dimensions Educational Research Foundation: Dimensions Educational Research Foundation was formed in 1998 to study how science, math and literacy learning can be enhanced by the addition of more visual-spatial activities into classrooms and homes. For a number of years, the Foundation has conducted and collected research on how children best develop visual-spatial skills and how teachers and families can optimally support this development. Dimensions Educational Research Foundation’s goal is to create and deliver unique educational programming to 1) Help people better

understand and appreciate the natural world by developing visual-spatial skills; and 2)
Improve science, math and literacy learning through visual-spatial skills.