

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT
For Immediate Release
Contact: Kathy Archer
(802) 985-2507

ECHO Fundraising Builds Community

Burlington, VT—The building site for ECHO at the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, the new two-story lake aquarium and science center on the Burlington waterfront, is abuzz with activity. Over the last few weeks, most of the 16-person staff for the world-class attraction moved into their new quarters at the foot of College Street. Exhibit spaces are being readied for the first of the 2,200 live fish, amphibian and reptile inhabitants to move in next month. The nearly 100 hands-on interactive displays designed and installed by Exposition TCD, Montreal-based leader in the fabrication of museum and permanent expositions, are coming alive in the 30,000 square-foot building. Vermont's newest attraction is scheduled to open in June.

ECHO, formerly the Lake Champlain Basin Science Center, has been renamed as well as rebuilt. The new name reflects the Ecology, Culture, History and Opportunity for stewardship of the Lake Champlain Basin--the core mission of the new lake aquarium, science center, and community resource--as well as recognizing Senator Patrick Leahy for his longstanding commitment to this project and the stewardship of Lake Champlain and its watershed.

The \$14.5 million project has been ten years in the making. Under the leadership of board chair, Sarah Muyskens, and capital campaign chair, George E. Little, Jr., the organization is approaching final stages of reaching its fundraising goal as well.

Contributors to the project come from a wide range of ages and interests. Long-time community members, George and Elaine Little, made a lead gift for the George Little Family Water Wall, a stunning cascade of water on black marble in the entryway representing the sight, sound and smells of our life-enhancing Lake. The youngest donor, seven-year old Marley Young, a first grade student at the Chamberlin School in South Burlington, raised \$1000 for ECHO by selling her beautiful handmade notepaper, carefully crafted from plants and natural materials she collected within the Basin area.

Approximately half the funds came from the federal government. J. Warren and Lois McClure contributed \$2.5 million, two anonymous gifts totaled another \$1.5 million, and Bob and Cynthia Hoehl also made a substantial gift. The remaining funds came from family and business supporters across the Basin.

(over)

Opportunities still exist for individuals and businesses to participate in the ECHO building and exhibits. The names of all donors of \$1000 or more received by March 31 will be etched on the black marble Founders' Wall in the foyer of the building. Made of Champlain marble from Isle La Motte, embedded with fossils, the wall will be a learning experience in itself says board chair Muyskens. "We want every square inch to be a fun and educational experience for visitors to ECHO," she says. "People will be able to look for many different fossils in the marble." Donor levels will range from Charlotte the Whale, "one of a kind," Muyskens notes, for the federal government gift, and Olenelles, "very rare indeed," she says, to honor the McClures, to Cephalopods, Brachiopods, and Bryozoa. Muyskens anticipates about 200 names from sources throughout the community will be engraved on the wall. "We have been overwhelmed," Muyskens says. "ECHO truly speaks to the heart of the Basin community."

The building is an intriguing example of sustainable design strategies. Design, construction and operation of the new building follow stringent guidelines of the national LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™. The building draws as much as possible on local materials, state-of-the-art energy-saving operations, optimum efficiency equipment, and environmentally-friendly materials. Within all areas of operation--from animal care and office management to gift shop product and food services—ECHO will follow environmentally-sound practices.

More than 90 percent of the water in Lake Champlain comes from rivers and streams running through small towns, pastures and backyards in 8,234 square miles of Vermont, New York and Quebec. ECHO aims to engage the nearly 500,000 people who live in the Champlain Basin and the nearly six million who visit each year in the stewardship of this irreplaceable resource.

For additional information, to make a contribution, to volunteer, or to learn more about forthcoming opening events, please write to ECHO at the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, One College Street, Burlington, VT 05401, or telephone (802) 864-1848.

#####