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**Adorable Head Start Kids Forage for Fossils and Walk the Red Carpet with Elmo . . .
. . . Celebrating PNC Program to Boost Preschool Science Skills**

The PNC Foundation invests in teacher training, family learning activities and support of planetarium show that takes children to the moon

PHILADELPHIA, PA, October 22, 2009 – Today, The Franklin Institute and The Academy of Natural Sciences kicked off an innovative program designed to arm preschool teachers with hands-on science basics and to engage families in science. The program is made possible with a more than ½ million dollar investment in preschool science education from the PNC Foundation.

Both the Institute and the Academy will begin sending their experts to preschool classrooms to help teachers create age-appropriate science lessons. The grant also funds visits to the science centers for preschoolers and their families.

In addition, *One World, One Sky: Big Bird's Adventure*, made its Philadelphia premiere today at The Franklin Institute's Fels Planetarium. Through the lens of astronomy, children join Elmo, Big Bird and Hu Hu Zhu—a Muppet from the Chinese co-production of Sesame Street—to explore the night sky. The planetarium experience aims to provide young children in the U.S. and China with age-appropriate introduction to astronomy, to promote positive attitudes toward science, and to foster cross-cultural appreciation. The show was created by Sesame Workshop the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street, and its partners, with major funding from the PNC Foundation and the National Science Foundation.

"The Franklin Institute and The Academy of Natural Sciences are renowned for excellence in science education," said Bill Mills, president of PNC for Philadelphia and southern New Jersey. "We believe that partnering with institutions like these will ensure a better future for area children and a better prepared workforce for the Greater Philadelphia region."

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“Early excitement for science can be the key to lifelong passion and commitment,” said Academy President and CEO William Brown. “The Academy is delighted to be on center stage with PNC in opening these new worlds for the children of this city and its neighbors.”

“All children in our community deserve the opportunity to learn about the wonders of science,” said Dennis M. Wint, president & CEO of The Franklin Institute. “The Institute is thrilled to have the chance to introduce the youngest of children, their families, and their teachers, to science learning in everyday life, and to continue our longtime partnership with PNC through this program.”

According to a study by the National Research Council, research-based math and science learning is likely to pay off with increased achievement, literacy and work skills in these critical areas.

The PNC Foundation has pledged up to \$6 million in grants to fund regional science centers over three years and to conduct an independent evaluation of the program’s success. Two million dollars is allocated to programs in Pennsylvania. The investment by the PNC Foundation, which receives its principle funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (NYSE: PNC), is in celebration of the fifth anniversary of PNC *Grow Up Great*, the 10-year, \$100 million investment in early childhood education.

Additional support for *One World, One Sky* comes from the W.L.S. Spencer Foundation, China Association for Science and Technology and the National Natural Science Foundation of China.

About The Franklin Institute

Located in the heart of Philadelphia, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. Pennsylvania’s most visited museum, it is dedicated to creating a passion for learning about science by offering access to hands-on science education. For more information, visit www.fi.edu.

About The Academy of Natural Sciences

Founded in 1812, The Academy of Natural Sciences is the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the Americas and a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. Located in the heart of Philadelphia, the museum is one of the city’s top cultural attractions and a major resource for science education for teachers and schoolchildren. For more information, visit www.ansp.org.

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