



## **4 Sundays • 4 Museums • Free General Admission**

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**For more information contact:**

Rebecca Westphal, 616.485.4965 or

Kristy Harrington, 616.929.1713

### **Year-long Collaboration between Museums Announced**

*Grand Rapids, Michigan* -- For four Sundays in 2012, the four major downtown museums will open their doors free of admission. One Sunday each quarter, January 22, April 15, July 15 and October 21, the Grand Rapids Art Museum, the Grand Rapids Children's Museum, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum and the Grand Rapids Public Museum will join together to welcome the region's residents for free general admission at each institution from noon to 5 pm.

Generously supported by presenting sponsors Amway and Fifth Third Bank, the collaboration was organized by Rebecca Westphal, formerly with the Public Museum. "The idea came from other cities such as Boston and Los Angeles, where similar collaborations have existed for years. After researching the concept, we had preliminary conversations among the museums, but until major sponsors were secured, the idea couldn't move forward," said Westphal. "It is so terrific that Amway and Fifth Third have stepped up to make this happen for the community."

The collaboration has numerous benefits for all who will participate. Downtown Grand Rapids will welcome visitors drawn by the attraction of the free admission, some of whom may not have been downtown recently, or ever. These visitors will become familiar with the amenities available--the shops, restaurants, and parking options, making them more likely to return for additional reasons. They will have four more reasons to endorse the message "Let's go downtown."

Motivated by free general admission to all four museums to venture into unfamiliar territory, a family would have the opportunity to sample new experiences, at no financial risk. Depending on the age of the children, a family of 5 could save as much as \$114 if they take advantage of these four Sundays to visit each museum.

The four cultural institutions have separately offered times of free or reduced admission for special events, but coordinating together on the same days will draw visitors into the city center to enjoy the museums on their own merit. "The beauty of the collaboration for museums is that they are able to offer their core exhibits and basic programs without using precious resources to create or accommodate a special event," said Westphal. "New audiences attracted by the collaboration will experience the value of what these wonderful cultural resources bring to the quality of life here in Grand Rapids, day in and day out."

According to Dana Friis-Hansen, Director and CEO of the Grand Rapids Art Museum, ""We are excited to participate with other downtown museums in this wonderful program, welcoming new and returning visitors to enjoy the permanent collection within the wonderful spaces of GRAM's award-winning building. By sharing the treasures and educational programs at no cost, *Museums Free 4 All* is an important community collaboration that we hope helps build a larger and more diverse museum-going audience within our city."

Sponsor Fifth Third Bank has been supportive of the concept since they first became aware of it. "We are delighted to be partnering with Amway and these local institutions to launch this community initiative. We feel strongly about supporting cultural organizations in all of our communities. Providing free access to these fine museums reinforces the positive community collaboration that makes West Michigan a very special place, and we wanted to support it," stated Tim Lyman, Senior Vice President, Marketing.

"Supporting Museums Free 4 All is an amazing way to benefit the community where we work and live," said Global Amway Brand Manager David Madiol. "We're excited to help more families have fun, quality time together while sharing in the rich educational, cultural and exploratory experiences offered by our museums."

Featured organizations include:

Grand Rapids Art Museum [www.artmuseumgr.org](http://www.artmuseumgr.org)

Grand Rapids Children's Museum [www.grcm.org](http://www.grcm.org)

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum [www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov](http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov)

Grand Rapids Public Museum [www.grmuseum.org](http://www.grmuseum.org)

Free general admission will be offered during these *Museums Free 4 All* dates and hours:

Sunday, January 22, noon - 5 pm

Sunday, April 15, noon - 5 pm

Sunday, July 15, noon - 5 pm

Sunday, October 21, noon - 5 pm

Any special programming or exhibit fees may still apply.

It is hoped that the collaboration will result in increased numbers of visitors who enjoy their experiences and become regular museum-goers and members. Organizers have discussed continuing the program annually, and will make that decision after evaluation of the first half of 2012.

Participating sponsors and collaborators include:

Amway Corporation

Fifth Third Bank

Downtown Alliance

Downtown Development Authority

Full Circle Marketing

Community Media Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

Kent District Public Library

CBS Outdoor

WOODTV8/WOTV41  
Town Square Broadcasting

The website [www.museumsfree4all.org](http://www.museumsfree4all.org) will have links to all the organizations. Information will also be available at [www.facebook.com/Museums-Free-4-All](https://www.facebook.com/Museums-Free-4-All).

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