



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Stefanie Santo 215.448.1152

**THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE LAUNCHES TWO NEW EXHIBITS:
CHANGING EARTH AND ELECTRICITY SATURDAY, MARCH 27**

Philadelphia, PA, March 24, 2010 – The Franklin Institute, Pennsylvania’s most visited museum, will launch two new continuing exhibits on Saturday, March, 27. These two complementary, highly interactive exhibits *Changing Earth* and *Electricity* were developed in tandem by The Franklin Institute’s own exhibit team – a process three years in the making. Together they will help visitors explore the interconnected nature of our lifestyles, our technology and our environment. Support for the *Changing Earth* exhibit is provided by the Sunoco Foundation, the Hamilton Family Foundation, and investors from the *Inspire Science!* museum renovation effort. Media partner is WPVI-TV 6ABC. The *Electricity* exhibit is presented by PECO, Proud Corporate Partner of The Franklin Institute. IBEW Local Union 98 is the Associate Sponsor.

“The opening of *Changing Earth* and *Electricity* completes our ambitious 10-year plan to restore, rebuild, or replace each exhibit in the building,” said Dennis Wint, President and CEO of The Franklin Institute. “We are grateful for the generous support of our partners including PECO, the Sunoco Foundation, the Hamilton Family Foundation, IBEW Local 98, AT&T and 6ABC – along with investors in the *Inspire Science* campaign.”

“With PECO’s more than 100 year history of providing electricity to our region, we are proud to support an exhibit that emphasizes the critical role of Philadelphia and The Franklin Institute in the adoption of electricity in American cities,” said Denis O’Brien, PECO president and CEO. “The exhibit establishes once again the genius of Ben Franklin and his exceptional contribution to scientific discovery.”

“The Sunoco Foundation is proud to support The Franklin Institute and the new *Changing Earth* exhibit. By showing how people and nature interact on a daily basis, *Changing Earth* promotes science education and lifelong learning in a manner that is both accessible and inspiring,” said Ruth A. Clauser, President of The Sunoco Foundation.

“The Hamilton Family Foundation is pleased to support the exciting new *Changing Earth* exhibit at the Franklin Institute. Recent weather and seismic events have certainly reminded us of our intimate connection with our planet. Science is truly all around us and we are pleased to be part of this exciting interactive exhibit that will engage Franklin Institute visitors of all ages,” said Dorrance H. Hamilton.

-more-

CHANGING EARTH

The Earth is always changing. The powerful forces that shape our air, water and land will continue to transform our planet. This new exhibit explores how our response to Earth's changes will impact our future on Earth. The Franklin Institute's exhibit team has chosen to engage visitors in a series of dynamic sensory experiences that illuminate the science behind those changes taking place around the globe. Visitors enter *Changing Earth* through an image of the Earth projected on a fog curtain, as though they are descending into the Earth's atmosphere. The stunning massive satellite image globe is the exhibit centerpiece while a giant screen presentation recounts the history of our ever-changing planet. Within the exhibit, visitors are invited to calculate their own carbon footprint, find solutions to reduce carbon emissions, explore seismographs of recent earthquakes, construct a building to see if it can withstand an earthquake at the **Shake Table**, experiment to see how dams and water volume affect river flow and erosion in the **Stream Table**, and even create their own weather then step "on camera" to deliver it in front of the **Weather Prediction Green Screen** sponsored by 6ABC. Each experience provides insights into repercussions that may result from our responses to changes—natural or manmade. Museum staff and volunteers will be interpreting these various hands-on experiences within the exhibit daily throughout the launch and beyond.

ELECTRICITY

Perhaps the museum exhibit with which The Franklin Institute is most closely identified, the *Electricity* exhibit is newly re-imagined and energized with interactive devices and graphics glowing from within. The exhibit invites all takers to become conductors for static charge, learn how the body uses electrical signals, build basic circuits, retrace the path of electricity from a common wall outlet back to the power plant, and literally "feel" the electricity required to power up different kinds of light bulbs, feel the electricity and watch their hair stand on end from a static charge generator, and even use personal cell phones to transmit signals that will illuminate LED artwork on the **Cell Phone Disco Wall** sponsored by AT&T. At the heart of the exhibit is a **Sustainable Dance Floor** which generates power to illuminate itself as people move across the tiles. Visitors will even see sparks fly from a giant **Tesla Coil** overhead. The many exhibit interactives provide exciting ways of learning how electricity is created, what resources are needed, the pros and cons of different power sources, and—by taking part in a social game to lead a nation through the process of technological and economic development—how sustainable electricity generation ultimately requires global decision making. Just as Ben Franklin engaged in hands-on experimentation, so too will visitors. To celebrate the launch, a series of activities will take place in and around the exhibits – enhancing the overall experience. The popular **Van de Graaf** demonstration returns. This "hair-raising" experience shows the effects of a buildup of charges. Supplements to the exhibits include daily live shows such as *Ben's Curiosity Show* which demonstrates some basic Franklin inventions and experiments, and *The Weather Show* which reveals the science behind extreme weather - from creating snow to demonstrating the power of a tornado.

ARTIFACTS

For some historical perspective, both exhibits contain artifacts from the Institute's own collections. Visitors to *Electricity* will be able to browse an electronic copy of Ben Franklin's *Experiments and*

Observations in Electricity and see other artifacts of the Frankliniana collection including Franklin's Lightning Rod and Franklin's Static Electricity Tube, Box of Leyden Jars (demonstrating the first "battery", built and named by Franklin), Franklin's Electrostatic Generator and Thornton Oakley's "Mural of Franklin's Lightning". The *Changing Earth* exhibit also features some of the most important artifacts from the collection that emphasize the long history of The Franklin Institute's relationship with weather. The Franklin Institute created one of the first state-funded programs for documenting weather in the 1800's, and some of the artifacts on display include the *Meteorological Journal* that was used to compile all of the observations, antique weather monitoring equipment, and artifacts that demonstrate the potentially devastating effects of natural disasters.

About The Franklin Institute

Founded in honor of America's first scientist, Benjamin Franklin, 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. It is dedicated to creating a passion for science by offering new and exciting access to science and technology in ways that would dazzle and delight its namesake. For more information, please visit www.fi.edu.