



July 21, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Erin Gong

734.995.5439 734.995.1188 (fax)

egong@aahom.org

Playing Hide and Seek at the Museum

For a science and technology museum, letterboxes are quaint. No gadgets, no gizmos. Just a list of clues, a carefully disguised treasure box, a logbook, and a custom-made (often, homemade) rubber stamp.

The Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum will be a host location for five of these treasure boxes—called letterboxes. Letterboxes are part of a treasure hunting hobby called letterboxing, an orienteering activity that uses riddle-like instructions and charming rubber stamp artistry.

Hobbyists learn about letterbox locations through online sites (e.g. <http://letterboxing.org>, <http://atlasquest.com>), or by word of mouth. They decipher a list of clues to find a letterbox. When they find it, they “exchange” stamps by pressing their “signature stamp” into the letterbox logbook and then pressing the letterbox stamp into their personal logbook. There are over 20,000 letterboxes hidden in North America alone.

Three letterboxes have already been placed in the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum by a Saline letterbox enthusiast who goes by the “trail name” (letterboxing nickname) MichKathy. MichKathy has found over 300 letterboxes and placed about 10 in southeast Michigan. She is currently working on two more letterboxes for the Museum.

MichKathy says, “We wanted to combine one of our hobbies with one of our favorite locations in Ann Arbor. My plan is to start with the five letterboxes and then probably add more later.”

MichKathy and her children, ages 10 and 8, carved the stamps for the letterboxes at the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum.

An inquisitive and creative visitor already stumbled upon one of the letterboxes. The child found a “plastic Tupperware container” on the back of a monitor somewhere in the Museum. Neither the child nor his mother knew what to make of the find, and so they brought it to the Museum’s front desk.

The Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum provides more than 250 interactive exhibits that spark the imagination. The Museum is a regional destination attracting 200,000 visitors every year. The mission of the Museum is to inspire people to discover the wonder of science, math and technology. Visit www.aahom.org or call 734.995.5439 for more information.

###