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Subject: Benjamin Franklin House - Countdown to Opening - 1 Month to Go!
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December 2005 at Benjamin Franklin House

Dear Friends,

The exciting new exhibition developed by the US Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World, opened last week at the US National Constitution Center in Philadelphia (kudos to Rosalind Remer, Executive Director and Page Talbott, Curator). It featured an original inscription Franklin prepared for the opening of the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1755, shortly before he ventured to London. The words he used – happily flourishing, the bounty of public spirited persons – are all appropriate for the opening next month of Benjamin Franklin House.

December has seen the completion of all remaining conservation work. But there are still busy days ahead. Here's what the first two weeks of January will hold:

- 'snagging' – sorting out remaining conservation details
- full installation of the Student Science Centre by Screenhouse Productions – they will also complete the 'historic music video' that orients visitors in the introductory Seminar Room
- BT Skynet, Sysco, Lutron and others will install remaining lights, speakers, projectors for the Historical Experience, with final build-out on the servers necessary to integrate all these elements seamlessly
- actresses cast in the part of Franklin's 'daughter' Polly Hewson (daughter to Franklin's landlady and the one live character in the Historical Experience) will rehearse and their costumes will be fitted, with final editing of the sound and visual track, all to be overseen by Event Communications and Elbow Productions

This and much more. The exciting deadline of 17 January 2006 looms for Franklin's biggest day yet: his 300th birthday, when his only remaining residence opens to the public.

***Voice of Benjamin Franklin on the Historical Experience**

Emmy-award winning Peter Coyote has agreed to record the part of Benjamin Franklin in the Historical Experience. He joins Academy Award-nominated actress, Imelda Staunton, the voice of Margaret Stevenson, Franklin's landlady, in bringing the script to life. Mr. Coyote, who will record his part on 3 January, is currently appearing in the US television series, Commander in Chief with Gena Davis, which has just been nominated for three Golden Globe awards. He was also the narrator for Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room, which is a shortlisted nominee for a 2005 Academy Award (best documentary). He has also lent his voice to the two-hour documentary, Imagining America: Icons of 20th Century Art, which will air on PBS, 28 December 2005, a film journey through images and interviews with an array of American artists and art historians, examining the lives and work of artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol.

He was scientist Keys, in Steven Spielberg's E.T. The Extraterrestrial; starred in Jagged Edge (1985); alongside Shelley Long and Bette Midler in Outrageous Fortune (1987); in Roman Polanski's Bitter Moon (1994); with Dustin Hoffman and Sharon Stone in Barry Levinson's Sphere (1998); with Robin Williams in Patch Adams (1998) and opposite Harrison Ford and Kristin Scott Thomas in Random Hearts (1999); featured in Erin Brokovich (2002); in Brian De Palma's Femme Fatale (2002); in A Time for Dancing (2002); co-starred in the made-for-TV, Phenomenon II (ABC, 2003), sequel to the feature film with John Travolta; and as lead in Northfork (2003). Television roles include: Bon Voyage (2003), which he

also dubbed in French; Deadwood (HBO, 2004-), The 4400 (USA, 2004-); Law & Order: Trial By Jury (NBC, 2004-2005); and The Inside (Fox, 2004-2005). His narration and voice work includes numerous documentaries for National Geographic, official television announcer for the Academy Awards telecast, and narrator for American Experience: Edison's Miracle of Light and Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom.

***Support for the Benjamin Franklin House Opening Gala**

HSBC, thanks to long-time supporter, John Studzinski, Co-head of Corporate Investment Banking at HSBC, has agreed to be £25,000 lead sponsor of the Opening Gala on 17 January at the royal palace, the Banqueting House, close to 36 Craven Street. We are grateful for his leadership.

Our patron, behind the successful US Challenge, has yielded \$35,000 from Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch in support of the Gala, which he has generously matching for a total sum of \$71,000! This funding will help offset the costs of the event and also contribute to repaying the £275,000 outstanding project loan from Britain's Architectural Heritage Fund.

We anticipate over 350 to be in attendance at what will surely be an exquisite occasion. Master caterer, William Norris, treated the Board to a tasting of the meal that will be served on the night, which echoes menus of the period.

The highest ranking US official in Britain, Robert H. Tuttle, Ambassador to the Court of St. James's will represent the United States at the Gala.

***Return of the Craven Street Bones**

Dr Simon Hillson of London's Institute of Archaeology recently visited the House to discuss return of a number of the Craven Street bones, found during initial conservation work on the House. These are remnants of the anatomy school established by Dr. William Hewson, Polly's husband, which began during Franklin's tenure in the House. A 'bone pit' will be a dramatic point in the Seminar Room and their revelation triggers the beginning of the Historical Experience. The majority of the bones will remain in Dr. Hillson's lab as he and other researchers continue to review the stories they tell about the history of early surgery. Fittingly, the Medical History Room in the Student Science Centre now features the skeleton, Stan, and a circulation, and bone and organ game!



January 2005
Student Science Centre, Medical History Room

May 2005

August 2005

December 2005

***Educational News**

Ana Doria Buchan, Benjamin Franklin House Education Officer, has recruited a number of core schools for the 2006 Benjamin Franklin Science Fair which will bring UK and US children in London together to devise their own answers to the science problems Franklin explored during his time in the city. Westminster City School, Cricket Green Special Needs School and the American School London will all take part.

***In-kind Support**

Insurance leader Marsh has been a generous supporter of the project and their UK communication's team has helped with a December briefing to nearly 200 press contacts. They will also be producing marketing literature in support of the opening.

Benjamin Franklin House Board member, Alistair Johnston, Managing Partner of KPMG, has arranged for a number of volunteers to assist with the 2006 marketing plan for the House.

***Time Magazine**

In the December 26, 2005-January 2, 2006 European edition of Time Magazine there is a feature on Benjamin Franklin House, reaching 600,000 subscribers. The article notes, "compared to the aristocratic homes of other US Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin's House at 36 Craven Street is downright modest. ...the House's interior is handsome but spare, reflecting the thrifty nature of the man who popularized the proverb, 'a penny saved is a penny earned.' ...After three centuries, the House in which he spent [his London years] has been reinvented."

***Ticketing**

We have reached agreement with the Player's Theatre, around the corner from the House in the lovely, vaulted Craven

Street arches, gaining a retail presence for the House and the Historical Experience. Passersby will be able to procure tickets however most will be sold over the Internet from our website, www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org (facility available next month – allowing booking up to one year in advance) and by phone.

We have so much to celebrate this festive season and we have you to thank for your attention and support. Next month, our countdown reaches its exciting conclusion.

Until then, best holiday wishes,

Márcia

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