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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SBM Charitable Foundation Supports Construction of the *Butterfly Encounter* at the Connecticut Science Center

Grant supports all-season butterfly experience and greenhouse providing an immersive learning laboratory for students and families

Hartford — April 14, 2017—The SBM Charitable Foundation (SBMCF) has made a significant investment in STEM education with a generous grant that will support the construction of the new *Butterfly Encounter* at the Connecticut Science Center. The new offering, debuting in summer 2017, will be one of the major highlights of the *Science Forward* initiative that was announced earlier this year. *Science Forward* includes exhibit additions and augmentations as well as adaptable classroom and laboratory spaces to meet the growing statewide demand for STEM learning experiences.

“The SBMCF is pleased to continue our partnership with the Connecticut Science Center via its *Science Forward* initiative and enhancement of STEM education,” said Doreen Downham, Executive Director of SBM Charitable Foundation. “Our funding support of the new butterfly habitat fits well within our focus on education enrichment for area school systems and students. We are excited that the Connecticut Science Center will be offering this type of exhibit for all of its visitors to experience.”

The *Butterfly Encounter* at the Connecticut Science Center is an all-season butterfly habitat and greenhouse that will delight visitors and serve as an active learning laboratory for students investigating plant and animal life cycles and ecosystems. The *Butterfly Encounter* will feature numerous species of butterflies (primarily from Central America) as well as thirty species of tropical plants including orchids and bromeliads. The garden will offer a number of nooks and avenues to explore and will feature an “emergence window” where visitors can view butterfly pupae’s transformation into adulthood.

The lush, tropical habitat will be an engaging and immersive experience for visitors of all ages who will explore a tropical environment filled with exotic plants and animals as well as the butterflies themselves. The *Butterfly Encounter* will be installed in an existing, unfinished greenhouse space on the Science Center’s fourth floor. The project includes a fabricated enclosure to fit within the existing greenhouse space, interior landscaping, hardscaping, and irrigation systems. The *Butterfly Encounter* is designed to meet USDA regulations for keeping butterflies.

Science Forward and the new *Butterfly Encounter* will enhance the learning experience for visitors in 2017 and far into the future. The *Butterfly Encounter* will allow the Science Center to present new programs focused on Life Sciences, a content area that is important to the K-12 curriculum of the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which the State Department of Education adopted in November of 2015. The Science Center is a leading partner in the implementation of NGSS, focusing on professional development in the new standard for teachers across the state.

"Butterflies are beautiful, captivating insects, and their general appeal to children and adults alike provides an ideal real-life connection to introduce visitors of all ages to key concepts of habitats and adaptations, ecosystem conservation, and life cycles," said Cheryl Tokarski, Connecticut Science Center Vice President of Programs.

The *Butterfly Encounter* will include informational signage and programming that will allow students to explore topics within the Life Science framework, from "animals need food to live and grow" (Kindergarten) to "plants and animals have unique life cycles" (grade 3) to natural selection and adaptation (grades 6-8).

"The *Butterfly Encounter* will offer a unique opportunity to explore a lush, tropical habitat all year long," said Matt Fleury, Connecticut Science Center President and CEO. "The experience will be memorable, educational, and unparalleled in the state of Connecticut." Fleury added, "The SBM Charitable Foundation has been a steadfast and generous supporter of our work. Their focus on students east of the Connecticut River has been critical in our efforts since opening in 2009. The SBM Charitable Foundation's support of the *Butterfly Encounter* is yet another example of their commitment to improving the educational experience and lives of students in their service area and beyond. We are grateful for their partnership."

For more information about the Science *Forward* project and the Connecticut Science Center, visit CTScienceCenter.org/butterfly-encounter/.

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About the Connecticut Science Center The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Serving more than 2.3 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries covering a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include four educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store, and ongoing events for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. The Connecticut Science Center is also the home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, offering powerful Professional Development for educators. More information: CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.