

EVERHART MUSEUM

NATURAL HISTORY, SCIENCE & ART

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Press Photographs are Available Upon Request

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Everhart Museum to Participate in “One Book, Every Young Child” On April 30th at 6:00 pm

Scranton – March 25, 2008: The Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science & Art is pleased to participate in **One Book, Every Young Child**, a state-wide, collaborative program highlighting the importance of early literacy development in pre-school age children. Join children’s author, Katherine Ayres, on April 30, 2008 beginning at 6:00 pm at the Everhart Museum for a reading of her book, *Up, Down, and Around*. Following the story, the author will discuss the book with the children. Activities related to the book will also be offered.

Each year one book is chosen to inspire many activities and events involved in the project. *Up, Down, and Around*, written by Pennsylvania author Katherine Ayres and illustrated by Nadine Bernard Westcott, has been named the 2008 selection of the third annual Pennsylvania **One Book, Every Young Child** early literacy program. The book is billed as a “rollicking celebration of things that grow,” featuring children learning about a garden teeming with life, producing a variety of edible plants, such as corn that grows up, onions that grow down, and tomato vines that twine all around.

More than a half million Pennsylvania children ages 3-6 are reached annually through the **One Book, Every Young Child** program which stresses the importance of reading early and often to young children and how that impacts their future lives. The beauty of the **One Book, Every Young Child** program goes far beyond just giving parents and caregivers a book to read to preschoolers. It emphasizes ways that adults can engage children in activities such as talking about a book’s cover and illustrations, discussing the action in the book and favorite parts and making up pretend play games related to the story.

“I’m humbled and honored to have my book selected,” said Ayres. “In some ways I’m really a poster child for early literacy. I was read to constantly as a child, and it was natural for me to start writing stories of my own. I’m delighted and excited about the chance to travel the state and have an effect on children’s connections with books and literacy.” *Up, Down, and Around* is an excellent choice for the program, with language that is extremely simple and rhythmical. “It’s a very easy book on the ear. Children have a better recall of books when there is that rhythmical language and patterning,” said Ayres.

On the first level, *Up, Down, and Around* is about vegetables. But it’s also about plants in general and growing things. “The insects add an entirely different dimension,” said Ayres. “There is so much going on because of the wonderful illustrations. I couldn’t have been happier with the choice of the illustrator. Her illustrations make the book sing.” The book is also about directionality, and those reading the book to children can engage them in conversation about directions and locations, helping to stretch their vocabulary with words such as in front of, behind, underneath and more.

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Across the nation, just under half of children between birth and five years (47.8%) are read to every day by their parents or other family members, according to the study, "Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook" released Nov. 1, 2007, for Reach Out and Read by UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities. This is the first report to track state by state daily rates of reading to young children. The study provides both national and state by state information about whether parents are meeting the recommendation of reading aloud to their children ages 0-5. The percentage of families reading to their children every day varies by state and by race/ethnicity and family income within states. In Pennsylvania, 56.7% of children ages 0-5 are read to every day, above the national average; however only 36% of students are at or above "proficient" in reading by grade 4. The **One Book, Every Young Child** reading initiative hopes to help change these statistics. The program includes author visits across the state to libraries, children's museums, preschools, Head Start centers and family literacy programs

One Book, Every Young Child is made possible through a collaboration of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Please Touch Museum, State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Library Association, Pennsylvania Public Television Network, Pennsylvania Center for the Book, Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children, The Pennsylvania Child Care Association, PennSERVE, HSLC/Access PA and Verizon. This program was supported in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by Pennsylvania's Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

The **One Book, Every Young Child** program at the Everhart Museum is free to the public and limited to 150 participants. Each child will get a free copy of *Up, Down, and Around*. For more information or to pre-register contact the Lackawanna County Children's Library at (570) 348-3000 ext. 3015 or visit www.albright.org/children's.

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About the Everhart Museum: Founded in 1908, the Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science & Art is the largest general museum in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Everhart Museum, located in Nay Aug Park in Scranton, is a not-for-profit institution dedicated to the collection, care and display of a diverse array of artifacts, including natural history, science and fine arts. Through our exhibits and programs, the Everhart Museum has become an invaluable regional resource for educational and cultural opportunities. General support for the museum is received from the Lackawanna County Office of Education & Culture, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the City of Scranton. For more information visit our website at www.everhart-museum.org or contact us at 570-346-7186.

The Everhart Museum is open Thursday through Monday through December 31st. Museum hours are Noon-4:00 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Monday; 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. on Saturday; and Noon-5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$5/adults, \$3/students & seniors; \$2/children 6-12, and free to Everhart Museum members. For more information, contact the museum at 570-346-7186 or email general.information@everhart-museum.org.

About Katherine Ayres: Ms. Ayres has been a lover of books since earliest childhood, when she began inventing stories before she could write them. Her childhood home state of Ohio is the setting for her first two novels, *Family Tree* and *North by Night: A Story of the Underground Railroad*. Her present home, Pittsburgh, is the setting for her third novel, *Voices at Whisper Bend*. As part of her research for this book, which takes place during World War II, she spent a day on a tugboat on Pittsburgh's Monongahela River. Ayres traveled farther afield for her fourth and fifth books. *Silver Dollar Girl* begins in Pittsburgh, but quickly moves to the untamed terrain of the Colorado Rockies during the 1880s Silver Boom. *Under Copp's Hill* visits turn-of-the-century Boston's North End and explores mysteries that lurk in a settlement house and pottery. *Stealing South* returns to the 1850s in Ohio and Kentucky and is a companion book to *North by Night*. Whether writing about contemporary characters or historical ones, Ayres enjoys the opportunity to travel and study the real places she includes in her books. *Crickets*, *Spider*, *Ladybug*, and *Pockets* magazines are among the publishers of her short stories for children. She also writes plays for both children and adults, several of which have received professional readings.

Ayres' love of literature was a theme during her first career as a teacher and elementary school principal, and she continues to enjoy working with children and teachers in the school setting. She teaches Writing at Chatham University, where she also coordinates the Masters of Arts in Children's and Adolescent Writing. She is a founding member of the Playwrights' Lab at Pittsburgh Public Theatre. When she is not writing, she skis, golfs, gardens, and quilts. She and her husband are parents to three adult children and grandparents to three, a girl and two boys.