



Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails **Visiting Exhibit Back by Popular Demand** **at Mississippi Children's Museum**

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MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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***Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails* Visiting Exhibit Back by Popular Demand at Mississippi Children's Museum**

Jackson, Miss. (April 27, 2018) - The world's most beloved #1 blue engine rolls back into the Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM) this summer. *Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails*, an interactive exhibit created by Minnesota Children's Museum and inspired by the popular children's series will steam into the Gertrude C. Ford Exhibition Hall from May 26 through September 9, 2018. This exhibit is locally sponsored by Trustmark Bank and Atmos Energy.

Featuring the favorite engines and destinations from *Thomas & Friends™*, the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) -focused exhibit seeks to engage children, ages 2 through 7 years, and families in foundational skills that foster STEM literacy through playful learning experiences. The exhibit incorporates foundational STEM practices that encourage thinking mathematically, making comparisons, experimenting to solve problems using a variety of methods and tools, thinking creatively, and reflecting on actions and results.

"The skills and proficiencies children learn and refine through play in the early years set the stage for future learning and success from the kindergarten classroom to the workplace," said Dianne Krizan, President of Minnesota Children's Museum. "*Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails* will deliver high-quality playful learning experiences rooted in science, technology, engineering, and math for millions of children across the continent."

Visitors to the 1,500 square foot exhibit will be delighted as they find themselves surrounded by the Island of Sodor's iconic locations: Knapford Station, Sodor Steamworks, and much more. In the exhibit, children help Thomas and his friends solve a variety of challenges, from a simple sorting and shape identification activity to more complex engineering obstacles, such as completing a train track using track pieces with different levels of elevation. As children confront new challenges and test their abilities, the smiling faces of Thomas, Percy, Victor and others are there to offer encouragement and remind children how "really useful" they all are.

The *Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails* exhibit was designed and developed by Minnesota Children's Museum in partnership with HIT Entertainment, a subsidiary of Mattel, Inc. Fisher-Price, the #1

Infant/Preschool Toys manufacturer, is the presenting sponsor for the exhibit. 3M is the national tour sponsor.

Inside the Exhibit:

- Climb into Thomas' cab and explore the engine's inner workings. Flip levers and investigate other moveable parts that trigger train noises such as braking, whistles and steam.
- Fix Percy's wobbly wheel by removing and replacing parts and experimenting to find a combination of wheels, rods and bolts that work.
- Explore the favorite Island of Sodor destinations including: Tidmouth Sheds, Brendam Docks and the Sodor Search & Rescue Station on an over-sized Thomas Wooden Railway train table.
- Work with old and new friends loading luggage, livestock and other freight into the coaches of two train cars.
- Collaborate with others to get Percy moving by loading coal into his coal box and filling his tank with water from a water tower.
- Suit up as the conductor to exchange money and sell tickets to other visitors taking a ride on the train.
- Wander through a Thomas & Friends™ retrospective featuring model engines from the original live action series produced in London, copies of the original drawings and manuscripts from the Rev. W. Awdry, the creator of Thomas & Friends™, and a collection of memorabilia documenting the history and evolution of Thomas & Friends™ through books, television, and toys.

About Minnesota Children's Museum

For more than 30 years, Minnesota Children's Museum has combined early childhood research and best practices to provide children and families with hands-on experiences that develop healthy minds and bodies, build critical and creative thinking skills and prepare children for success in school and in life. A non-profit community organization and leading cultural institution, the Museum serves more than 450,000 children and adults each year through immersive experiences and environments that encourage children's active exploration and adult engagement.

As the nation's leading developer of traveling children's museum exhibits, the Museum is a trailblazer in creating immersive learning environments, reaching more than 15 million children and adults in the United States, Canada and Mexico through the nation's largest collection of children's traveling exhibits. The Museum is consistently rated as one of the top children's museums in the country by national media outlets like *Forbes* and *Parents* and was recently named as a finalist for an Institute of Museum and Library Services Medal of Service, the nation's highest honor conferred on museums and libraries.

About Hit Entertainment

HIT Entertainment is one of the world's leading preschool entertainment companies, specializing in building powerful brands based on engaging stories. HIT Entertainment's world-class portfolio includes Thomas & Friends™, Mike the Knight™, Fireman Sam®, Bob the Builder, Barney®, Angelina Ballerina®, Pingu®, and Rainbow Magic®.

HIT Entertainment excels at creating and building globally successful brands which capture the hearts and imaginations of preschoolers and their families. This is achieved through exceptional storytelling in multiple formats, enhanced by creating high quality character-based products and experiences with best-in-class partners. HIT Entertainment's lines of business span television and

home entertainment production, content distribution, digital media, publishing, consumer products and live events and attractions. HIT Entertainment, a subsidiary of Mattel, Inc., has operations in the UK, US, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. For more information visit www.hitentertainment.com

About Fisher-Price

Fisher-Price, Inc., a subsidiary of Mattel, Inc. (NASDAQ:MAT) located in East Aurora, N.Y., is the leading brand of infant and preschool toys in the world. The company's legacy of high quality toys has enhanced early childhood development for more than 82 years. Some of the Company's best-known "classic" brands include Little People®, Power Wheels® and Imaginext®. Fisher-Price is also a leading developer of baby gear products (infant swings, bouncers, high chairs), as well as a wide array of character-based toys inspired by high quality children's programming such as Dora the Explorer™, Mickey Mouse Clubhouse and Thomas & Friends™. The Company's website, www.fisher-price.com, as well as its Facebook page, www.facebook.com/fisherprice provide valuable information and resources to parents and grandparents around the world.

About 3Mgives

3Mgives is a recognized leader in corporate giving, philanthropy, volunteerism and community engagement. Since 1953, 3M has invested \$1.3 billion in cash and products around the world and was most recently honored with the United Way Spirit of America Award, the Silver U.S. President's Volunteer Service Award and the Excellence in Mentoring Award for Corporate Leadership. For more information, visit www.3Mgives.com or follow @3Mgives on Twitter.

3M National Sponsorship

Minnesota Children's Museum's long-time supporter 3M has signed on for a 5-year national sponsorship of the *Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails* exhibit, providing a strong connection to their history of innovation in science and engineering. "Minnesota Children's Museum delivers high-quality STEM learning opportunities for children across Minnesota and beyond. We're thrilled to take our collaboration to the next level and impact children and families across the country as the national sponsor of *Thomas & Friends™: Explore the Rails*," said Kim Price, Vice President, 3Mgives.

About Thomas & Friends™

Thomas & Friends™ was created by a father for his son nearly 70 years ago and today is enjoyed by families in more than 185 territories and in 30 languages. The #1 blue engine and his friends invite children to enter a world of imagination through the tracks of a train and the words of a story. Children embark on adventures with their engine friends while experiencing timeless life lessons of discovery, friendship and teamwork. *Thomas & Friends™* is the #1 preschool toy license in the US, according to The NPD Group, Inc., and makes tracks to great destinations on PBS KIDS® and Sprout® in the US and on Treehouse and Télé-Québec in Canada and with downloadable episodes available through iTunes. For more information, please visit www.thomasandfriends.com. Follow Thomas on Facebook at facebook.com/thomasandfriends and Twitter @ThomasParent.

About the Mississippi Children's Museum

The Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides unparalleled experiences that ignite a thirst for discovery, knowledge and learning in all children. MCM is dedicated to inspiring Mississippi's children from all backgrounds to discover and achieve their potential. The museum features 40,000 square feet of exhibit space designed around five primary initiatives: Literacy, STEAM, Health and Nutrition, Cultural Arts and Mississippi Heritage. The museum's exhibits, programs, and outreach opportunities provide engaging, explorative, hands-on educational activities for children of all ages. To learn more about MCM visit www.mschildrensmuseum.org.

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