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For Immediate Release

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Museum Director announces retirement

Grand Rapids Public Museum Director Mary Esther Lee recently had “Emeritus” added to her title, announcing plans to phase into retirement over the next few months. Lee was named Museum Director shortly after the museum’s transition from a department of the City of Grand Rapids to an independent operation.

Director Emeritus Lee began her career with the Public Museum in 1971 as a volunteer docent and was actively involved for several years. As a result of her volunteer work on the exhibit and long range planning committees of the board, she joined the Museum’s Foundation staff officially in 1979 as Coordinator of the Long Range Planning Committee.

Through the next decade, Lee was instrumental in the planning and fundraising for the Museum’s Van Andel Museum Center built on the Grand River at Pearl Street, coordinating the efforts of staff, advisory committees, and consultants in the design and construction of the facility and its initial exhibitions. In 1994 she was named Planning and Development Officer with the Public Museum’s move to the new building. She has served the Museum as Assistant Director, and Director in the years since. She will continue to be active with the Museum in a consulting capacity, and serve on several advisory boards.

"My career at the Public Museum has been long and fascinating. In those nearly 38 years of service, it has been my privilege to be in the center of the action during a

period of great change: from the early, grassroots stage of exploration by 17 community task forces planning for the future, through the recent transformation of museum operations from City to nonprofit management. The broad community of colleagues, both within the institution and far beyond, has been a source of daily inspiration and satisfaction. I look forward to this next stage of my professional life in an even broader context.”

Dale Robertson, President and CEO of the Public Museum, says, “Mary Esther’s dedication to the Museum has been instrumental in getting this institution to where it is, and we will miss her considerable talents as an integral part of the staff.”

The Museum will hold a celebration in Lee’s honor at the Van Andel Museum Center April 30, 2009. For more information, call 456-3977.

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