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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Public Museum Previews Ken Burns Documentary,  
Dedicates Day of Programming to *The National Parks***

Grand Rapids, MI (June 24, 2009) – Many a summer vacation has been planned around a national park visit, and over the decades Public Museum exhibits have inspired some of those travels. So, the latest collaboration is no surprise. In an effort to help raise awareness of these precious, educational places, the Public Museum will host a special preview screening of award-winning producer Ken Burns' film, ***The National Parks: America's Best Idea*** September 12 in the Meijer Theater. The one-hour overview, free with general admission, will play at 11 am, Noon, 1 pm and 2 pm. It will highlight the twelve-hour series that airs six consecutive nights, September 27- October 2, on WGVU-TV.

“For much of its early history, the Public Museum was the repository for travel mementos from local residents,” says Chris Carron, Director of Education, Research and Interpretation at the Public Museum. “When people from Grand Rapids journeyed abroad, they returned with amazing artifacts, and many thought it their civic duty to donate these to the Museum for public display.” In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the focus shifted to domestic interests and Americans became concerned with preserving and visiting their own natural and cultural treasures. Beginning with the establishment of Yellowstone in 1872, Congress set aside large areas with historic significance or scenic beauty as national parks for the public to enjoy. Geysers, canyons, glaciers, battlefields, and underground caverns captured the public's imagination. Relics and souvenirs from such places displayed at the Museum inspired future generations of museum-goers to take trips of their own. Today we can also enjoy these wondrous places through documentary films such as *The National Parks*.

The Public Museum's **National Parks Day**, a community-wide family event September 12<sup>th</sup>, has many activities planned in conjunction with the movie preview, including presentations by the Boy Scouts and Lisa Myers, Chief of Interpretation and Visitors Services at Sleeping



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Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. A display of park mementos from the Museum's collections will be displayed at the Public Museum beginning in August, with new items added each week.

Objects in this temporary exhibit include:

- Petrified wood from the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona
- Ash from Mount St. Helens, Washington
- Stalagmites from Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky
- Relics from Civil War battlefields, including a shell from Gettysburg, and wood with embedded bullets from Spotsylvania and Bull Run
- Family photos and postcards from a Voigt family vacation to Yellowstone

The stories behind these treasures and many others will be shared with listeners on *The WGVU Morning Show with Shelley Irwin* airing on 88.5 FM/1480 AM or 95.3 FM/850 AM at 10:30 am Mondays for six consecutive weeks, August 24 – September 28. For more information see [www.wgvu.org/parks](http://www.wgvu.org/parks).

The Public Museum is a collector of treasures, a motivator and resource for life-long learning, and a community partner in the pursuit of insight and understanding. The Museum is located on the banks of the Grand River in downtown Grand Rapids at 272 Pearl Street NW. Beginning September 5, the Museum will return to its non-summer hours of Tues 9 – 9; Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat 9 – 5; and Sunday Noon – 5. For more information call 616.456.3977 or visit [www.grmuseum.org](http://www.grmuseum.org).

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