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New Early Learning Center opens at FWMoA **The first of its kind at the museum serves a new audience**

September 5, 2013 (Fort Wayne, IN) -- The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is pleased to announce the September 8 opening of the new Early Learning Center, a specialized hands-on gallery designed for its youngest visitors and their parents and caregivers.

The Early Learning Center at FWMoA is a newly renovated space housed in the original Learning Center for general children's audiences, a component of the museum-wide renovation and expansion completed in 2010. At the time, the Learning Center was also the first of its kind, but after a few years of use and studies used to evaluate its effectiveness, Museum staff concluded this space could become a launch pad for children through age 8 to become familiar with the visual arts and the museum as the building blocks for lifelong visual literacy.

"We became convinced that by focusing the space to serve young children, 'the early child', we could make a more meaningful impact on our region's children," said Max Meyer, FWMoA Director of Children's Education.

The new Early Learning Center now features play-centered activity areas, each focusing on developmental skills that are part of the process of becoming visually literate. "Young children thrive in structured environments. This new space allows children and caregivers to focus on a single element-- Build, Draw, or Read, for example--at each activity area, giving them an opportunity to really immerse themselves in that element," said Meyer.

"Being a parent, an educator, and just a 'big kid' in general, I found myself able to identify with the needs and behaviors of the kids we are trying to serve. We spent days trying to match the wall colors to the colors you would find in a box of crayons," said Meyer.

The Museum also developed a series of monthly programming for early learners called My Mini Museum. Each second Tuesday at 10:30am, FWMoA Education Staff will lead an activity that focuses on one of the activity areas. Visit fwmoa.org/prek-12 to learn more about this programming.

The ELC is designed to serve walk-in visitors, Museum members, but also entire classes from preschools, daycare centers, and homeschool groups. The FWMoA Education Department has built programming to serve diverse groups of students in centers focusing on early childhood development. Parents and educators are encouraged to call 260.422.6467 to learn more about the Early Learning Center and its programming opportunities.

About the Fort Wayne Museum of Art: Beginning with art classes in 1888 given by J. Ottis Adams and later William Forsyth, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art has evolved into a center for the visual arts community in Northeast Indiana. Regularly exhibiting regional and nationally acclaimed artists, the FWMoA also boasts an extensive permanent collection of American Art as well as prints and drawings from artists such as Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol. The Museum is committed to the collection, preservation, presentation and interpretation of American and related art to engage broad and diverse audiences throughout the community and region, and add value to their lives. The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is a funded partner of Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne.