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March 12, 2018

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**New Exhibit “Be the Astronaut”**

**Opens at the Grand Rapids Public Museum this June**

**Grand Rapids, MI** – The Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) announced today that the new traveling exhibit, *Be the Astronaut,* will open June 16, teaching visitors about the concepts, challenges and excitement of spaceflight!

Visitors take command of futuristic space vehicles, chart their course to the Moon, Mars and beyond and land and explore highly detailed digital re-creations of actual places in the solar system built using data from NASA space probes.

*Be the Astronaut* teaches STEM based content via a fusion of physical exhibitry and state-of-the-art video game technology. Visitors will have their own crew of virtual content experts throughout every stage of the exhibit. These digital characters will help visitors learn what’s needed to fly a spaceship, pilot a lander, and drive a surface rover — then will be there as visitors climb in the simulators to actually perform these feats, in a thrilling narrative adventure that spans the solar system.

“We are excited to bring *Be the Astronaut* to the community this summer,” said Dr. Stephanie Ogren, the GRPM’s Director of Science. “Through STEM based hands-on activities that are scientifically verified by NASA experts, this exhibit let’s our community travel to space from right here at the Grand Rapids Public Museum.”

In each space capsule, a monitor serves as the ‘windshield,’ giving visitors a first-person view of their adventures. Touch-screens and an industrial-quality joystick put visitors in command.

During missions, the entire cockpit comes alive with animated lighting effects, game visuals, and sounds that make visitors believe they are astronauts. Special companion robots will move about the hall and interact with visitors.

The focus of the exhibit is on the concepts common to all space flights and invites visitors into a futuristic storyline as the framework to communicate these ideas.

The experience is scientifically verified by experts at NASA for accuracy and feasibility.

Admission to *Be the Astronaut* will be $12 for adults, $7 for children, $9 for Kent County resident adults, $4 for Kent County resident children, and $2 for all Museum members! Tickets include general admission to the Museum and will go on sale in spring 2018.

This exhibitwill be located on the Museum’s third floor and will run from June 16 through September 16, 2018.

*Be the Astronaut*was designed and produced by Eureka Exhibits, LLC. - A NASA Space Act Agreement Partner Company.

*Be the Astronaut* is sponsored by Meijer, David & Carol Van Andel Family Foundation, STAR 105.7, BDO USA, LPP, Chris & Kim Branoff, Cascade Engineering, Jim & Barb Haveman, Lacks Enterprises, Inc., Williams Kitchen & Bath and Holiday Inn Downtown Grand Rapids.

This exhibit is brought to you by the citizens of Kent County and the voter approved millage.

**Grand Rapids Public Museum**

The Grand Rapids Public Museum is an invaluable, publicly-owned institution that is home to more than 250,000 unique artifacts that tell the history of Kent County and beyond, houses the only planetarium in the region, and is responsible for protecting the Norton Indian Mounds, a national historic landmark. The Grand Rapids Public Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, with its main location in downtown Grand Rapids, MI at 272 Pearl Street, NW. For additional information including hours of operation, admission fees and exhibit/event listings, please visit [www.grpm.org](http://www.grpm.org/).

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