



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Attachments: Mars Phoenix Landing Party Photos (3)

“Mars Attacks”

The Children's Museum

May 27, 2008 (West Hartford, CT)...While Connecticut prepared for Memorial Day, The Children's Museum in West Hartford had its eyes on the universe, hosting a program about America's newest landing on Mars. The program at the Travelers Science Dome in Gengras Planetarium followed the progress of NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander mission with geology classes where children and adults made core samples out of miniature candy bars and learned why the search for more evidence of water on Mars is so important. Connecticut space artist Rick Costello manned telescopes outside, giving visitors a glimpse at a small red dot in the sky many million miles away that was getting a new visitor, the Phoenix Mars Lander. Just before 8:00 pm, as Phoenix entered the most critical portion of its mission, everyone held their breath until radio signals were relayed indicating that Phoenix had landed. Said Science Dome Director Jason Archer, "NASA made it look easy but for the families watching and waiting here, it was a really exciting time. Cheers went up when the landing was confirmed. What a great science lesson."

In celebration of the successful landing, staff at The Children's Museum

used state of the art digital planetarium technology to take a virtual tour of Mars and answer questions about the NASA mission. Then it was time for more fun with a special showing of the movie *Mars Attacks* projected on the Planetarium dome, complete with popcorn. Everyone also saw first images from the Phoenix Mars Lander streaming in.

The Travelers Science Dome at the Gengras Planetarium is part of The Children's Museum hands-on learning about science for younger children and families. One of the state's major attractions, each year it serves nearly 200,000 children and their families.

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