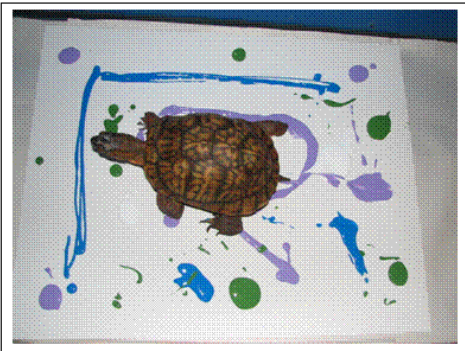




FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### At The Children's Museum: From Creative to Practical, Animals Can Be Trained in Different Ways

West Hartford, Conn. (August 30, 2006)... Original art created by Bobby the Box Turtle and demonstrations by Fidelco guide dogs were two of the many highlights of The Children's Museum's special Animal Day, held Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup> in the museum's courtyard. Other activities that culminated the museum's special summer Thursday programs were an appearance by the Iguana Society with their huge iguana, Digger; a very cuddly ferret and educational material from the Ferret Association; the Department of Environmental Protection was on hand with an impressive bear pelt, skull and helpful literature hand-outs; and a variety of hands-on projects and craft activities were enjoyed by visitors.



Shown here, at left, Bobby the Box Turtle, one of the museum's 24 resident turtles, spent the day creating works of art. According to Cindy King, UTC Wildlife Director at The Children's Museum, turtle painting does not harm Bobby. "Two vets of exotic animals were consulted before Bobby began painting. The paint used is non-toxic. We hope that Bobby's painting will help raise awareness about the risks that wild box turtles face in Connecticut", King commented. Habitat fragmentation continues to be the primary cause of the Box Turtle's decline in the state. Many egg-bearing females are killed on our roads as they search for nesting sites. The Eastern Box Turtle is listed by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection as a "Species of Special Concern." No Box Turtle may be disturbed or removed from the wild, and possession requires a DEP permit.



At right, volunteers from Fidelco demonstrated training of German Shepherd pups as guide dogs to the sight-impaired.

#### Fact Sheet – Box Turtles

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has listed the Box Turtle as a "Species of Special Concern." No Box Turtle may be disturbed or removed from the wild and possession requires a permit from the DEP.

#### Current Threats to Box Turtles

- Many egg-bearing females are killed on our roads as they search for nesting sites. Note that Box Turtles have a strong homing instinct. If you find a turtle on the road, move it to the side it was headed. Resist moving it to a "safer" location. The turtle will likely die trying to find its way back to its original home.
- Law mowing remains a constant threat. If your property borders a park or wooded area, walk the grassy areas before you mow, and mow during the heat of the day when turtles are less likely to be in open areas.
- The state's exploding raccoon and skunk populations have had a devastating effect on Box Turtles, with nearly 100% of turtle nests dug up at study sites. Turtle hatchlings are prey for a variety of animals and disasters, as their hinged plastron (the ventral part of the turtle's shell) is not yet functional.
- Many turtles are poached for the pet trade. The removal of just a few adults from a local population can doom that group to extinction within as little as 20 years.

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