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Get the “Dirt” on Soil this Fall at The Durham Museum
Dig It! The Secrets of Soil opens October 2, 2010

(OMAHA, Neb.) – There are more living creatures in a shovel-full of soil than human beings on the planet, yet more is known about the dark side of the moon than about soil. These are just a couple of the fascinating facts visitors can learn from the new temporary exhibition *Dig It! The Secrets of Soil*, which will be on display at The Durham Museum, October 2 – December 26, 2010.

Created by Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History, The Durham Museum is the only location outside of Washington DC to host the exhibition. The 4,000-square-foot display reveals the complex world of soil and how this hidden ecosystem supports nearly every form of life on earth. Visitors can explore soil found in their own backyard and in obscure locations, with 54 soil samples representing each U.S. state and territory and the District of Columbia, as well as soil maps and touchable soil models. In doing so, they will discover a world teeming with life. In fact, so many organisms contribute to the health of soil that scientists have not even named them all.

Dig It! shows how every type of soil is unique. Visitors can observe the way water moves through different soils in tumbler tubes containing sand, silt, and clay. The flow of water through soil can affect minerals and gases and all life that depends on soil. Soil color tells fascinating stories about mineral compositions and soil formation or history. *Dig It!* color cards help visitors to unveil the stories behind soil samples. Visitors also can get in touch with their inner detective and learn about the soil food web in the “Matters of Life and Death Theater.”

“The mission of this exhibition to educate millions about the importance of soils truly aligns with the Soil Science Society of America’s (SSSA) own purpose of advancing soils as being fundamental to life,” said SSSA CEO Ellen Bergfeld. “Soil has an impact on climate change and our carbon footprint, among other important environmental issues. The SSSA is the proud founding sponsor of *Dig It!*”

After examining soil close up, exhibition visitors can step back and see the “big picture” with a world map and interactive stations that present the connection between soil and global systems. Models demonstrate the roles of soil around the house and the formation of soil in commercial and residential construction, dams, playing fields, neighborhoods, roads and in food production. An evocative video explains soil’s role as a “secret ingredient” in such household goods as medicines, food, wine, textiles, paint, cosmetics and pottery.

Dig It! was created with the support of the Soil Science Society of America and the Nutrients for Life Foundation, which is underwritten by The Fertilizer Institute. *Dig It!* is sponsored locally by the Douglas County Commissioners, the Monsanto Fund, Northern Natural Gas, Cox Communications and the Steven H. Durham Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by William Buffett and Susan Kennedy.

Special Events & Programs

The Durham Museum will host a variety of special programs and family-friendly events to support the exhibition.

Antique Tractor Show – October 3, 2010

On the Sunday of opening weekend, Durham Museum visitors will be able re-live thresher days of the past and see beautiful antique tractors! This event features vintage tractors from the Elkhorn Valley Antique Power Association, quilting and educational demonstrations, and children's games celebrating the traditions and heritage of life on the farm.

“Let's Get Dirty” Day – October 23, 2010

Durham visitors will find out about the many ways people use and move dirt with an event that takes being messy to a whole new level! Museum guests will get up close with large earth moving equipment provided by John Deere, learn about the many types of organisms who call dirt their home and how dirt can be used to paint beautiful works of art! The Upper Big Blue Natural Resource District will also be on hand with their hands-on Fantastic Fun River Run exhibit which explores the challenges of maintaining a dynamic water system. These and many more hands on activities complements of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are a perfect way for the whole family to get “down and dirty” with soil!

Sheila O'Riley, “The Ugly Gardener” – October 12, 5pm Reception; 6:30pm Program

The Durham will welcome Sheila O'Riley also known as *The Ugly Gardener* for a special program. O'Riley considers being called *The Ugly Gardner* as a badge of honor. It's not because of how she looks, but in the way she gardens. Utilizing no-till farming technology as a foundation, she gardens by layering mulches and then planting into the mulch thus preserving the natural integrity of the soil. Reservations are required for this special presentation; contact Andrea Boschult for more information at (402)444-5071 or aboschult@durhammuseum.org.

About Soil Science Society of America

The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) is a progressive, international scientific society based in Madison, Wis. One of its goals is to improve public knowledge about soils. To this end, SSSA partnered with the Smithsonian Institution, one of the most distinguished and respected museum complexes in the world, on *Dig It! The Secrets of Soil*. SSSA viewed the exhibition as an opportunity to inspire future generations of soil scientists and more environmentally conscious citizens.

Founded in 1936, SSSA is the professional home for over 6,000 members dedicated to advancing the field of soil science. It fosters the transfer of knowledge and practices to sustain global soils, providing information about crop production, environmental quality, ecosystem sustainability, bioremediation, waste management, recycling and wise land use. For more information, visit www.soils.org or call 608-273-8080.

About The Durham Museum

The Durham Museum, making its home in Omaha's beautiful art deco Union Station, is home to permanent exhibits that preserve Omaha's vibrant history, traveling exhibits covering subjects ranging from history and culture, to science and industry, and many entertaining, educational, family-oriented activities. The Durham Museum is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and has strong ties with the Library of Congress, National Archives and The Field Museum. Admission is free for members and children age 2 and under; \$7 for adults; \$6 for seniors; and \$5 for children 3-12. For information about The Durham Museum please visit the museum's Web site at www.durhammuseum.org.