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**PNC FOUNDATION AND MASS AUDUBON, ECOTARIUM, AND  
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS COLLABORATE TO BOOST SCIENCE  
SKILLS  
OF AREA PRE-SCHOOLERS**  
*- PNC Foundation Invests in Local Schools -*

Worcester, MA , April 21, 2009 – Area pre-school children will have more opportunities to learn science basics and experience related activities that are educational and fun through the \$200,000 grant announced today, from the PNC Foundation to a Worcester-based educational collaborative consisting of EcoTarium, Mass Audubon and the Worcester Public Schools.

The two-year grant, which will launch this summer, supports *Grow Up Great with Science*, PNC's new initiative to help foster a foundation in science for area preschoolers at a time when many educators have sought increased emphasis on the discipline. A study by the National Research Council found that providing young children with research-based mathematics and science learning is likely to pay off with increased achievement, literacy, and work skills in these critical areas.

"We understand the critical need for students to have a base in science in today's technology-driven society. The PNC Foundation grant greatly enhances the programming we have for young children," said Deirdre Loughlin, Interim Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools. "By working with both Mass Audubon and the EcoTarium, our local teachers, schools and Head Start centers, will be creating a curriculum to teach age-appropriate science and share best practices to benefit others in this region. This professional development opportunity will benefit hundreds of children in the years to come. Scientific literacy begins with excitement around investigation, and we are delighted to be a part of this collaborative that will strengthen existing linkages."

The investment by the PNC Foundation, which receives its principle funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (NYSE: PNC), was among 15 grants in seven

states and the District of Columbia announced today in celebration of the fifth anniversary of PNC *Grow Up Great*, the 10-year, \$100 million investment in early childhood education. The PNC Foundation has pledged up to \$6 million in grants to fund regional science centers over three years and conduct an independent evaluation of the program's success. The second- and third-year funding is contingent upon successful completion of the prior year's project goals.

"Our support of the Worcester Collaborative project is another strategic investment to help our non-profit partners, preschools and caregivers develop stronger, smarter and healthier families and communities," said Nancy Wolcott for PNC. "Through these grants, we expect children will have experiences that would not otherwise be possible."

President of the EcoTarium Stephen Pitcher states, "the EcoTarium is dedicated to lifelong learning and thanks to PNC's generous funding; we will be able to do even more to reach the youngest members of our community. Because preschool age children have a natural curiosity in the world around them, we believe it is a pivotal time to energize that inquisitiveness and inspire a love of learning that will take them through adulthood. We are thrilled to be able to take advantage of this unique opportunity to partner with the Worcester Public Schools and local organizations that share our mission and look forward to providing educational programs that will motivate children to explore the natural world and encourage an interest in science."

"We are pleased with the confidence that the PNC Foundation has placed in Mass Audubon and our partners in funding this important program—the only project to receive funding from PNC in New England—and it speaks to the strong history of our environmental educational efforts for all children," said Mass Audubon President Laura Johnson. "This funding will allow us to better bring the wonders of nature and lay the foundation for science literacy in young children of greater Worcester."

The EcoTarium, Mass Audubon and the Worcester Public Schools will use the funding to train local pre-school teachers this summer and this fall, visiting classrooms, introducing families of pre-school children to science through field trips and open houses held at both the EcoTarium as well as Mass Audubon's Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary. Many of the activities will receive assistance from PNC employees as volunteers.