

**The Trout Museum of Art, Appleton Area School District, and Appleton Education Foundation
to Teach the Art of Compassion**

10,436 public school children use their artistic skills to create a healthier and happier community

Appleton, Wis., - The Trout Museum of Art, in partnership with the Appleton Area School District and the Appleton Education Foundation, are proud to announce a new project that aspires to teach the practice of compassion through the use of art. "The Appleton Compassion Project" is a community art project involving 10,436 Appleton Area School District K-12 art students. In fall 2010, participating students received a 6-inch-by-6-inch art panel to draw or paint their idea of compassion.

The inspiration behind the project came from Richard Davidson, PhD – a University of Wisconsin-Madison psychology and psychiatry professor and brain investigator who discovered that those who practice compassion have measurably healthier brains, and generally, a happier outlook on life. Davidson's vast research has earned him the most distinguished award for science given by the American Psychological Association – the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award in 2000; he was also named one of the world's most 100 influential people in 2006 by *Time Magazine*. Davidson's research shows that compassion can be learned, and should be practiced, as a skill.

"A little more joy might be within everyone's reach," says Davidson.

Appleton Area School District K-12 art students are currently creating their own individual representation of compassion on the art panels. Additionally, each student is crafting a written statement about their work. Then collectively, the more than 10,000 panels will be installed in the Trout Museum of Art galleries, on view for the public, from May 1 – June 30, 2011. Appleton-based Skyline Technologies will use advanced cloud development techniques to create tools that will assist museum visitors—as well as virtual visitors via the Internet—to view student artwork and read their compassion statements.

"Students have had to dig deep, and in some cases, discover for the first time how compassion is part of their lives," said James Heiks, fine arts coordinator for the Appleton Area School District. "Teachers have helped students by inviting special guests into the classroom, encouraging family discussions, and allowing the young artists to think, feel and explore this human condition called compassion. Our hope is that the future of the Compassion Project will evolve from creative expression to compassionate action."

Tim Riley, executive director for The Trout Museum of Art, agrees, "When the works are installed in our galleries, we hope that the students will see that they are part of a larger picture. Each 6 inch x 6 inch work of art will become tiles in a much, much larger mosaic of compassion."

The project also aims to influence the general public about the benefits of regularly practicing compassion.

"This is an opportunity for our greater communities to pause and think about compassion – and what it means to be human," said Riley. "The science behind Davidson's research suggests that this sort of contemplation is good for our brains. In that sense, the Appleton Compassion project is really about contribution to a healthy community through compassion and art."

Davidson has supported the Appleton Compassion Project since its beginning; he will be the headline presenter at a May 17, 2011 "Appleton Compassion Project Live!" event at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center where he will discuss his work on compassion. Tickets will be available at various community locations beginning March 15. "Appleton Compassion Project Live!" will be the culminating event in Appleton Education Foundation's 2011 Community Education Series.

For more information on the Appleton Compassion Project or the May 17th "Appleton Compassion Project Live! event, visit the online press kit at www.appletoncompassion.org.

About The Trout Museum of Art

The Trout Museum of Art (formerly the Appleton Art Center) was established in 1960 with a mission to promote, teach and nourish the creation and appreciation of the visual arts. The activities, which allow The Trout Museum of Art to fulfill its mission, include exhibitions, educational programming and special events such as the annual Art in the Park artist exhibitor festival, lectures, workshops, family fun days, musical performances and an annual exhibit for local artists. The museum officially became known as The Trout Museum of Art as of September 9, 2010, in honor of Dr. Monroe E. and Mrs. Sandra Trout who generously donated their 180-piece art collection to the organization, along with an endowment to preserve, protect and promote the collection.

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