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**PEROT MUSEUM UNVEILS REFINED LYDA HILL GEMS AND MINERALS HALL
AND ANNOUNCES NEW STRATEGIC FOCUS ON GEMS AND MINERALS**

The popular Gems and Minerals Hall reopens with four signature displays – including a stunning birthstone exhibit – plus the new Gems and Minerals Center of Excellence aims to elevate interest in gems and minerals while positioning Perot Museum in the international spotlight

DALLAS (Jan. 30, 2019) – Continuing its commitment to keep content relevant and exciting, the **Perot Museum of Nature and Science** will unveil a refreshed **Lyda Hill Gems and Minerals Hall** tomorrow (Jan. 31). In conjunction with the beautifully redesigned hall, Museum leaders also announced a new strategic initiative – the **Gems and Minerals Center of Excellence** – that aims to elevate interest and understanding of gems and minerals while positioning the Museum in the international spotlight. A new director has been hired to lead this key top-priority initiative.

Enhancements to the *Lyda Hill Gems and Minerals Hall* include a redesigned floor plan and new opportunities to educate and engage guests while highlighting one-of-a-kind signature displays and beautiful new pieces. Known for extremely rare and significant specimens, the Museum uses a pioneering “loan-versus-own” collection method to display and regularly rotate some of the world’s highest-quality gems and minerals, allowing citizens of North Texas to explore Earth’s art and be inspired to learn more.

“By bringing the world’s most exceptional gems and minerals to North Texas, we hope to inspire guests to more deeply connect with this fascinating science,” said Dr. Linda Silver, Eugene McDermott Chief Executive Officer of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science. “With a revitalized and redesigned gallery and the addition of the new *Gems and Minerals Center of Excellence*, the Museum is positioned to attract the most significant pieces in the world. We will be a leading authority for gem and mineral education for years to come.”

A refined gallery with four signature cases

With information presented in English and Spanish, the refreshed *Gems and Minerals Hall* features a total of 37 cases, including four new signature displays with large, easy-to-use touchscreens. One signature case highlights birthstones (including the months with more than one) in both rough form (in its natural state from the ground) and faceted form (cut for artistry purposes). An additional display showcases exquisite jewelry created from the birthstones for each month, which will rotate 12 times per year.

The Eyes of Africa, a show-stopping “alien eye” fluorite from Namibia on loan from Lyda Hill, gets its proper due in a larger case with updated details about its intriguing backstory. A third case displays a magnificent example of stibnite with robust clusters of crystal formations recovered from an industrial mine in the Jiangxi Province of China. Rounding out the premier cases is the beloved “grape jelly” geode – a 5-foot-tall amethyst geode – that invites guests of all ages to crank it open for a glittering peek.

Another stand-out piece in the gallery includes the luminescent “Aurora Butterfly of Peace” on loan from owner and curator Alan Bronstein. The work of art is comprised of 240 colored diamonds (some that fluoresce) in the shape of a butterfly that Bronstein says symbolizes a “spiritual connection to Earth for all humankind.” With colors ranging from fiery orange to tranquil blue and rosy pink, the “Aurora Butterfly” took 12 years to create and is adorned with diamonds from nearly every continent on Earth. On display through spring, the “Aurora Butterfly” is surrounded by a rainbow of mineral cases each dedicated to a different color.

A sampling of specimens with a southwestern flair is also displayed from Texas, Colorado, Arizona and California along with those from different countries, including China, Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Australia and Afghanistan. Another part of the gallery spotlights an array of minerals, including tourmaline, rhodochrosite, aquamarine, garnet, opal, fluorite, calcite, smithsonite, pyrite and quartz. There’s also a case displaying pieces on loan from Perot Museum staff and volunteers, demonstrating that anyone and everyone can participate in this captivating science in a variety of ways.

A new initiative, director and annual award to elevate the Perot Museum into the international spotlight

The updated hall is the first step of the Perot Museum's new strategic focus to shine internationally in the gems and minerals realm. The ***Gems and Minerals Center of Excellence*** marks the Museum's second initiative to elevate its status as a core for education and communication about the ever-changing sciences. (In April 2018, the *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey* launched with a new strategic focus on human origins. It supports, curates and disseminates the dynamic research developed by renowned paleoanthropologist Dr. Lee Berger and his team of more than 160 scientists working around the world.)

Spearheading the second strategic initiative is Kimberly Vagner, who recently joined the Museum as director of the *Gems and Minerals Center of Excellence*. Bringing a vast amount of expertise to the position, Vagner is charged with curating the collection, guiding the "loan-versus-own" method of displaying, creating ways to increase interest in gems and minerals, and developing educational programs for visitors of all ages.

The Museum also has established the **Perot Museum Gems and Minerals Legacy Award** to recognize support for the Museum's *Gems and Minerals Center of Excellence* and outstanding contributions to the gems and minerals community. Lyda Hill is the 2019 recipient of the newly named award in tribute to her longstanding stewardship of the Museum and generosity in sharing her personal treasures with the community. Dr. Silver and Mac McFarland, chair of the Perot Museum board of directors, will present the award to Hill during a ceremony this evening in the newly redesigned hall that bears her name.

"Lyda Hill's conviction that science holds the key to bettering the world for humanity led her to support the Perot Museum as a founding donor from the very beginning," said McFarland. "She supports the Museum in many ways—among them, for nearly 15 years, she has loaned exquisite minerals to the Perot Museum collection for millions of guests to enjoy and in hopes of inspiring a deeper understanding of the scientific wonders of gems and minerals."

Vagner agrees that the study of gems and minerals is a fascinating profession that also serves as a gateway to other sciences, incorporating not only natural beauty but also many facets of STEAM education such as chemistry, engineering, art, math, geometry, geology and technology.

"The Perot Museum has curated a gems and minerals display that is garnering world-wide attention," said Vagner. "It is a great honor to share the Museum's resources and knowledge, and to cultivate new partnerships within the gems and minerals community and inspire others to delve into this exhilarating field that encompasses so many components of science."

The Perot Museum of Nature and Science opened in late 2012 and has since welcomed more than 5.5 million people, reached 1.2 million students through field trips and educational programs, engaged 90,000 North Texans through community outreach and awarded \$2 million in school financial aid. Designed by 2005 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate **Thom Mayne and his firm Morphosis**, the Museum has been lauded for its artistry and sustainability. It is considered the top cultural attraction in Dallas/Fort Worth and is a Michelin Green Guide three-star destination.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Becky Mayad

work: 214-352-1881

cell: 214-697-7745

becky@mayadpr.com

About the Perot Museum of Nature and Science. *The top cultural attraction in Dallas/Fort Worth and a Michelin Green Guide three-star destination, the Perot Museum of Nature and Science is a nonprofit educational organization located in the heart of Dallas, Texas. With a mission to inspire minds through nature and science, the Perot Museum delivers exciting, engaging and innovative visitor and outreach experiences through its education, exhibition, and research and collections programming for children, students, teachers, families and life-long learners. The 180,000-square-foot facility in Victory Park opened in December 2012 and is now recognized as the symbolic gateway to the Dallas Arts District. Future scientists, mathematicians and engineers will find inspiration and enlightenment through 11 permanent exhibit halls on five floors of public space; a children's museum; a state-of-the-art traveling exhibition hall; and The Hogle Foundation Theater, a National Geographic Experience. Designed by 2005 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Thom Mayne and his firm Morphosis Architects, the Victory Park museum has been lauded for its artistry and sustainability. To learn more, please visit perotmuseum.org*