NEW YORK’S HIGHEST MUSEUM EXHIBIT OPENS

Wilmington, NY – The highest museum exhibit in New York opened today on the summit of Whiteface Mountain, New York State’s fifth tallest peak, and the surrounding area. The new exhibit was designed by The Wild Center, working with the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), and other organizations. This inclusive experience takes you from the Whiteface Ski Center to the Town of Wilmington to the summit of Whiteface, 4,867 feet in the air. Visit Whiteface Mountain, in Wilmington, N.Y., this summer and learn about one of the toughest climates in the world, and how this extreme place shapes the life that is able to survive there.

The new exhibit builds onto the many attractions already on the summit and around the mountain. Drive up the Veterans’ Memorial Highway, walk the alpine nature trail, travel through a 426 ft. long mountain tunnel and ride an elevator to the Round House and Weather Station on the summit of Whiteface. On the way, explore vibrant signs, interactive exhibits, videos, 3-D models and panoramas that interpret the natural history of Whiteface Mountain and the Adirondacks, including geology, alpine flora and fauna, watersheds and weather.

“How many museums get this kind of a chance to tell a story about a place that’s buffeted by hurricane force winds, and has an average January windchill of -62 degrees and get to tell the story in the exact site where it’s happening?” asked Stephanie Ratcliffe, The Wild Center’s Executive Director. “It was a great team effort. Many people do not realize how much stewardship and science is happening on the mountain all of the time. Now the 75,000 people who go to the summit every year will get a great view and the story behind it too. Many experts, like the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Adirondack Mountain Club, Wildlife Conservation Society, Adirondack Nature Conservancy, Ausable River Association, Wilmington Historical Society, Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation, SUNY Plattsburgh Geology Department and the New York Natural Heritage Program contributed content. ORDA and the Town of Wilmington staff were indispensable in the installation of the exhibit.”

Whiteface Mountain: The Exhibit is an exciting multi-sensory experience that will allow visitors to see nature in a cool, new way through a series of new exhibitions:

Veterans’ Memorial Highway
Drive up the Highway and stop at wayside exhibits that interpret the changing habitat as you gradually ascend over 2,300 ft. into one of the harshest environments in the world.
The Alpine Nature Trail, Tunnel and Elevator
Climb the Nature Trail to the summit to learn about the alpine ecosystem and the rare plants that survive there. Or arrive at the summit through a 426 ft. long mountain tunnel and elevator where you can learn how the Adirondacks were formed and how humans bored a hole deep into the mountain.

The Summit Experience
The Summit Experience in the Round House and Atmospheric Sciences Research Center highlights the extreme weather on the summit. Visit a working weather station and learn about the research that is done on the mountain. View Whiteface over an entire year in the life of the summit through an interactive movie filmed in high definition and made from over 280,000 images. Look in every direction from the observation deck and see a different story.

The Whiteface Ski Center
Use your smartphone on the gondolas at the ski center to watch videos about the animal athletes of the Adirondacks. Learn which animals race faster, jump higher and block more goals than the Olympic athletes who still train in the region. Explore the history of the Adirondacks and the Ausable River through exhibits at the entrance of the Ski Center and in the Town of Wilmington.

For those who can’t make it to Whiteface, or if they simply love the view, two real-time web cameras, one from the Summit and one looking towards Whiteface, make the mountain available to everyone http://wildcenter.org/cams/whitefacesummit.html and http://wildcenter.org/cams/whitefaceview.html.

“Whiteface is a natural resource,” said Ted Blazer, President and CEO of ORDA, which operates the mountain and the Olympic facilities in Lake Placid. “We have always wanted to have a way to tell the story of the mountain and the life on it, and now we are doing it in a comprehensive way. We think the exhibit will help all kinds of visitors to the area come away with a better idea of what makes the mountain and the Adirondacks so special.”

The project was supported as part of the Scenic Byways projects overseen in the region by the Adirondack North Country Association, a 57 year-old, not-for-profit economic development organization which works to strengthen key sectors of the economy in Northern New York. “There was a real spirit on this project,” said Kate Fish, ANCA’s Director. “I am pretty sure this is the first Scenic Byways exhibit with movies, remote cams filming snow storms live and putting them on the web, and we know it’s the first one in the state that’s higher than 4,000 feet. We got to see what goes into a big museum exhibit, and it’s a combination of science, creative design and serious craft. I can’t think of a better place to break new ground for how a byways program can look and feel than on Whiteface.”

The exhibition, on the Veterans’ Memorial Highway, Nature Trail, Summit Round House, Town of Wilmington and the Whiteface Ski Center is open to the public. Tickets are required to access the Memorial Highway, a five mile ascent to the peak, and a fee is charged for the gondola rides. Hikers to the summit can enjoy the exhibits as well.

This comprehensive Olympic Scenic Byway exhibition was prepared by The Wild Center as a part of a NYS Scenic Byway Program project, managed by the Adirondack North Country Association, funded by the Federal Highway Administration and administered by the NYS Department of Transportation.

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(IMAGES AVAILABLE)