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Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History to open cutting-edge gem and mineral hall named for alumnus and philanthropist David Friend

David Friend Hall opens October 23, 2016, coincides with Peabody's 150th anniversary

New display showcases extraordinary specimens from world's top collections and provides cutting-edge museum experience

New Haven, Conn. — The Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, one of the world's preeminent natural history museums, will open David Friend Hall, a state-of-the-art gem and mineral gallery, on Oct. 23, 2016 in celebration of the museum's 150th anniversary. The year-long construction project was funded by a \$4 million gift from Yale alumnus and Carbonite founder and executive chair David Friend '69. The gift funded the construction of the 2,300-square-foot gallery as well as an endowment for future displays and public programs. A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held on Oct. 13, 2016.

"We are incredibly grateful for the tremendous generosity of David Friend," said David Skelly, director of the Yale Peabody Museum. "As the Peabody celebrates its 150th anniversary this October, this project symbolizes our dedication to showcasing groundbreaking discoveries in science in new and imaginative ways. Our hope is that the reimaged space of the David Friend Hall serves as the gateway for our visitors to explore the museum's extensive collections and to become inspired."

David Friend Hall will feature more than 150 of the world's premier mineral and gem specimens drawn from some of the most significant private collections in the United States. The gallery will integrate free-standing, large-scale minerals with small-scale specimens in a dynamic visual display that is designed with the intention of rotating the displays often. It will utilize customized cases to showcase the uniqueness of each specimen. The hall's custom lighting will further enhance the experience by highlighting each specimen's natural — but often otherworldly — features.

"This project represents the fulfillment of a lifelong dream," said Friend. "The new gallery will showcase some of the world's most important mineral specimens in all of their glory, such as a three-foot-tall geode lined with dark purple amethyst crystals with a giant sparkling white Calcite crystal that extends from top to bottom. One does not have to be an expert on rocks or minerals to be transfixed by the beauty of the extraordinary collection we have assembled. I am so grateful that my alma mater has allowed me to make my dream a reality and to share my passion with the thousands of kids and adults who come through the museum every month."

Highlights from the inaugural installation will include:

- an extremely rare 30 million-year-old concretion from Fontainebleau, France that has never been on display in public;
- a 2,000-pound quartz crystal from Namibia dating back 500 million years, long before dinosaurs walked the earth;
- a 4,000-pound Chinese lime-green fluorite with quartz measuring 5 feet by 4 feet;
- the Sword of China Stibnite from the collection of James Zigras;

- a two-pound dark blue Tanzanite crystal — one of the largest in the world — from the collection of Rob Lavinsky;
- several prized specimens from the collection of Mark Pospisil, curator at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Dallas;
- a two-foot-tall twin quartz crystal from the collection of Gene Meieran;
- an array of thumbnail-sized crystals and other specimens from the collection of Jim and Gail Spann;
- cut gems and jewelry from gem experts C.R. “Cap” Beesley and B. Benjamin Zucker; and
- the Cullinan Blue Diamond Necklace, crafted from one of the largest blue diamonds ever discovered, and Ivory Camels encrusted with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and sapphires from the Smithsonian Institution’s collection, marking the first time the Cullinan necklace has been loaned to another institution since it was acquired in 2010.

High-res images of several of these specimens and others that will be on view are available at (ADD LINK)

David Friend Hall features new approaches to learning that reduce the need for signage and wall text, and engage a broad audience through the latest technology. Visitors will learn about the gem and mineral specimens through cloud-based, open source software accessible via smart phone or tablet. As new information about the specimens becomes available, the learning tools can easily be updated to reflect these changes.

The new gallery and the adjacent Hall of Minerals, Earth and Space will further advance the museum’s mission to communicate understanding of Earth history to a wide audience. The 126-seat-capacity David Friend Hall, designed by Christopher Williams Architects in collaboration with the Peabody, will also serve as a multipurpose programming space for the more than 300 public programs held annually and will enhance the teaching mission of the Peabody by making the space available to Yale students for classes and activities, a key priority for the institution.

“We want to create an experience that serves all of our guests, from students to seniors, and to all who seek and appreciate the beauty found in nature,” said Richard Kissel, director of public programs. “With this multipurpose programming space we can engage a large number of our constituents through various educational initiatives, from school programs to our annual Fiesta Latina and our Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration.”

David Friend Hall officially opens to the public on Oct. 23, 2016. Admission during the anniversary weekend is free, thanks to a generous gift from the Lucille and Arnold J. Alderman Fund. The Peabody will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Oct. 13, and will host a mineralogy symposium with leaders in the field on Oct. 22, 2016. The symposium has been organized by the newly established Peabody Museum Mineral Council, a small group of distinguished mineral collectors and enthusiasts from across the United States who will advise Professor Jay Ague, curator-in-charge of the Division of Mineralogy and Meteoritics, on further advancing the museum’s display and collection. Members of the council are: C.R. Beesley (chair), David Friend, Zoe Friend, Robert W. Jones, Carolyn Manchester, Eugene Meieran, Mark Pospisil, James and Gail P. Spann, and B. Benjamin Zucker.

For high-res images of specimens that will be displayed and more information on David Friend Hall and the Peabody Museum, visit (ADD LINK)

About David Friend

David Friend became interested in minerals as a child while exploring a construction site for I-95 near his home in New Rochelle, New York. He discovered a pocket of mica and quartz crystals in recently blasted rock. The beauty and complexity of the specimens sparked an interest in chemistry and crystals, which in turn led to a general interest in science and, eventually, a career in engineering. He received his B.S. in engineering from Yale in 1969.

Friend joined the Peabody Leadership Council in 2014. The 22-member council provides philanthropic support and advocacy for the Peabody's academic mission to advance knowledge and understanding of Earth's history, life, and cultures. Alison F. Richard, a renowned anthropologist, former vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, and former Yale University provost, chairs the council.

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