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Reginald F. Lewis Foundation Makes Largest Endowment Gift Ever to an African American Museum

(Baltimore, MD) - The Maryland Museum of African American History and Culture and The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation, Inc. have formally announced the largest endowment gift ever made to an African American museum. This is also the largest gift ever made from The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation. The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation awarded \$5 million dollars to fund the Maryland Museum of African American History and Culture's endowment campaign and to support the museum's educational programs and initiatives. The \$5 million dollar gift will be awarded over a period of five years—with the first \$1 million already in-hand.

Loida Nicolas Lewis, chairman of the Reginald F. Lewis Foundation and George L. Russell, Jr., Esq., chairman of the museum's Board of Directors are extremely excited about the impact of the gift on the museum and its educational outreach. Mr. Russell states, "People like Reginald F. Lewis mean so much to the future of our children. Although he faced many obstacles, he was relentless in his pursuit to realize his dreams, which reflects the many stories of our museum. From the past and present lives of men and women of Maryland, the museum will inspire hundreds of thousands of children, adults and future generations to not only believe in their biggest hopes and aspirations, but importantly, better understand one another. Although it is a Maryland-based museum, its vision is universal."

Foundation chairman Loida Lewis says, "At a time when we, as Americans, seek to better understand our place in the world, one cannot underestimate the power of one individual whose life signifies struggle, tenacity and triumph and that was Reginald F. Lewis. The family is so proud that he is remembered in this way."

Louis J. Grasmick, chairman of Fundraising for the museum states, "The building of an African American museum in our city can only have a galvanizing effect on the

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entire community. It is especially gratifying that such a substantial commitment has been made by an African American family. This generous gift will be meaningful to hundreds of thousands of children and families as they celebrate not only their heritage, but equally important, their futures. As a non-minority, I'm hopeful that this will light a brighter commitment to the entire community as we work together toward making this dream into a reality.”

With education as the primary mission, the museum has developed a partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education to reach more than 850,000 students and 50,000 teachers. Teachers, children and parents will be able to use the museum's resources and facilities to help Maryland close the African American achievement gap by developing an African American history, culture and art curriculum, teacher training programs and exciting pre- and post-museum activities.

“The generous donation from the Reginald F. Lewis Foundation for the museum will benefit many Marylanders, especially our children,” said Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools. “The partnership between the museum and the Maryland State Department of Education is unprecedented. This is the first time a museum and the education community are working together to develop educational materials and museum content simultaneously. I am extremely pleased with this collaboration and the support it is receiving.”

Reginald F. Lewis—a native Marylander—was born in East Baltimore and at the age of seven was enrolled in St. Francis Xavier—a Catholic elementary school run by The Oblate Sisters of Providence—an order that Mary Elizabeth Lang founded in Baltimore in 1828. Mr. Lewis later went on to attend and graduate from Dunbar High School where he excelled in sports by becoming the captain of the baseball, football, and basketball teams. After high school, Mr. Lewis attended Virginia State University on an athletic scholarship and later received a degree in Political Science and Economics. After

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graduation from the university, he enrolled at Harvard Law School and graduated in 1968.

Four years later, Mr. Lewis became a partner with the first African American law firm on Wall Street and later went on to begin his own business, The TLC Group, a venture capital firm. As a result of his prior successful buyouts of the McCall Pattern Company, in 1987 Lewis bought Beatrice International Foods for \$985 million, and created TLC Beatrice International—the largest black-owned and black-managed business in the U.S. with sales of more than \$2 billion in 1996. The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation was created in order to generously give to many causes, with a special emphasis on children’s programs and educational initiatives.

The result of over eight years of planning, the Maryland Museum of African American History and Culture will be the largest African American museum on the east coast. The museum’s mission is to be the premier experience and best resource of information and inspiration about the lives of African American Marylanders. The museum will realize its mission by collecting, preserving, interpreting, documenting, exhibiting and creating a climate for the appreciation and promotion of the rich contributions in history, art, cultural and spiritual expressions of African American Marylanders from their earliest times and into the future.

Having already received a design award, the striking state-of-the-art facility will include two classrooms (one equipped with distance learning technology donated by Verizon Communications), permanent and special exhibition galleries, an oral history recording and listening studio, an information resource center, a 200-seat theater, a museum shop and café, and flexible public program areas. To open in 2004 in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, the Museum will serve as a regional, national and global attraction that will celebrate the African American legacy of perseverance to attain excellence.

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