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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NEW MUSEUM RECEIVES GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM MASSMUTUAL FINANCIAL GROUP**

**Springfield-based Fortune 500 company provides major underwriting support for performances, films, and lectures at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art**

Amherst, Mass. (August 16, 2003) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art announced today that it has received major funding from Springfield-based MassMutual Financial Group in support of the new Museum’s Auditorium Programming. The two-year, \$100,000 underwriting grant will help with developing, promoting, and presenting programs within the Museum’s 140 seat auditorium. These programs include performances, films, and lectures designed in conjunction with the Museum’s rich exhibition program, as well as teacher training workshops and scholarly symposia exploring the field of picture book art and its connections to visual and verbal literacy.

The support from Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual) is a major boost for the popular Museum, which has welcomed 70,000 visitors since opening a little over eight months ago, nearly triple its original first-year estimates. Stated Museum Director, Nick Clark, “On so many levels and at this stage of the Museum’s life, MassMutual’s commitment is an extraordinary shot in the arm, and greatly enhances our ability to provide the public with quality programming. We are extremely grateful for MassMutual’s recognition of the value of this organization to the area and for its partnership in promoting the Museum’s important work.” Director of Development and Marketing, Nora Maroulis, added, “It’s a wonderful pairing: two Pioneer Valley neighbors that share both strong ties to the local community and appeal well beyond the region.”

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is the first full-scale museum in this country devoted to national and international picture book art, conceived and built with the aim of celebrating the art that we are first exposed to as children. Through the exploration of images that are familiar and beloved, it is the Museum’s goal to foster connections between visual and verbal literacy and to provide visitors of all ages and backgrounds with the confidence to appreciate and enjoy art of every kind.

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Frances Emerson, Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications at MassMutual stated, "MassMutual is committed to the promotion of arts and culture in our community, and we are pleased to offer our support to the Museum and its efforts to expand programming. The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art has proven to be a treasure for Western Massachusetts in its first year of operation."

MassMutual Financial Group - comprised of member companies with over \$240 billion in assets under management as of year-end 2002 - is a global diversified financial services organization providing life insurance, annuities, disability income insurance, long-term care insurance, retirement planning products, structured settlement annuities, trust services, money management, and other financial products and services. The MassMutual Financial Group is a marketing name for Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual) and its affiliates, which include: OppenheimerFunds, Inc.; David L. Babson & Company Inc.; Cornerstone Real Estate Advisers, Inc.; MML Investors Services, Inc.; The MassMutual Trust Company, FSB; Antares Capital Corporation; MML Bay State Life Insurance Company; C.M. Life Insurance Company; and MassMutual International. MassMutual is on the Internet at [www.massmutual.com](http://www.massmutual.com) <<http://www.massmutual.com>>.

The Museum—which houses three galleries dedicated to rotating exhibitions of picture book art, a hands-on Art Studio, a Reading Library, an Auditorium, and a popular Café and Museum Shop—is located at 125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA. Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 12 noon to 4 p.m. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children under 18, and \$10 for a family of six. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum's website at [www.picturebookart.org](http://www.picturebookart.org).

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