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**NEW CELEBRATION-THEMED SILK ROAD CHICAGO EXPRESS
PASSPORT FOR KIDS DEBUTS SATURDAY, FEB. 24**

**Six Chicago institutions will offer free admission to kids at select times February 24
through March 3**

February 20, 2007, Chicago, IL – To celebrate the debut of the new edition of the Silk Road Chicago Express Passport, Richard M. Daley, Mayor of the City of Chicago, has proclaimed Saturday, Feb. 24, 2007 **Silk Road Celebration Passport Day**. In honor of the new celebration-themed Express Passport, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Children’s Museum, Field Museum, Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum and DuSable Museum of African American History will offer free general admission to children 12 and under during specified times from Saturday, Feb. 24 to Saturday, Mar. 3.

“The Silk Road Chicago Express Passport was created to help young people experience different traditions and enlarge their view of the world by connecting them to the rich cultural opportunities offered throughout Chicago. This new second edition focuses on how people around the globe celebrate notable events and holidays,” said Dr. Laura Freid, CEO and Executive Director of the Silk Road Project.

Much like a traditional passport, the free Silk Road Chicago Express Passport is a log of each child’s journey. *Silk Road Chicago* travelers will collect stamps as they learn about the art and culture of the Silk Road by completing activities at Passport stations located in each of the participating institutions. Each Express Passport includes a place for the traveler’s photo, a map of Passport stations, a reading list prepared by the Chicago Public Library and a travel story written by recent Grammy award winner Bill Harley.

When the journey is finished, voyagers are encouraged to return a Passport postcard to the Silk Road Project, sharing reactions to their travels through drawings or words. From the group of completed postcards, five voyagers from each Express Passport edition will be randomly selected to win a family four pack of tickets to the April 21st family concert featuring Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble at Symphony Center. In addition, the Art Institute of Chicago will offer travelers the chance to win a free family membership to the museum.

Mayor Richard M. Daley has proclaimed Saturday, Feb. 24 **Silk Road Chicago Passport Celebration Day** to encourage all Chicago area children to “enrich their lives and expand their world view by taking full advantage of the splendid and varied opportunities *Silk Road Chicago* offers by obtaining their own free Silk Road Chicago Express Passport.”

Designed to introduce children to the ways various cultures throughout the world celebrate special events, the Silk Road Chicago Express Passport will be made available at the partner institutions listed above as well as all Chicago Public Library branches beginning Saturday, Feb. 24, 2007. Downloadable versions of the Silk Road Express Passport are also available at www.silkroadpassport.org.

The Silk Road Chicago Express Passport website is a comprehensive resource for a variety of fun interactive activities. Complete with a Passport blog kids can use to share their experiences, links to partner institutions and extensive information about Silk Road Chicago programming, the colorful, engaging website offers a easy way to access the Express Passport and extend children's journeys. Chicago families can visit the website at www.silkroadpassport.org.

The Art Institute of Chicago, always free for children 12 and under, will host a special kickoff event featuring the Silk Road Ensemble performing in the galleries, Saturday, Feb. 24 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The following institutions will offer free admission on select days and times for children 12 and under: The Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, Monday, Feb. 26 and Tuesday, Feb. 27; the Chicago Children's Museum, Thursday, March 1 from 5 to 8 p.m.; the DuSable Museum of African American History, Sunday, Feb. 25; and the Field Museum, Monday, Feb. 26 and Tuesday, Feb. 27.

About *Silk Road Chicago*

Silk Road Chicago (www.silkroadchicago.org) is a unique collaborative effort between the Silk Road Project, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, the Chicago Office of Tourism, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC). From June 2006 to June 2007, Chicago is being transformed through performances, exhibitions, demonstrations and events that explore cross-cultural discovery and celebrate the artistic legacy of the Silk Road. With this initiative, Chicago becomes the first city in the world to collaborate in a year-long partnership with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Project. *Silk Road Chicago* was initiated by Yo-Yo Ma, who dreamed of bringing the historic Silk Road, the ancient network of trading routes that connected the people and traditions of Asia with those of Europe, and the ideas it represents to life in one of the most diverse cities in the world. Inspired by this transmission of ideas and its modern-day manifestations, cultural organizations across Chicago are joining together as never before to offer a wide array of special concerts, exhibitions and other artistic programming exploring the themes of *Silk Road Chicago*.

The Silk Road Project's contributions to *Silk Road Chicago* include performances, master classes, workshops and educational programs featuring Ma and other Silk Road Ensemble members. Events will be presented in Chicago schools, universities and cultural institutions throughout the year, concluding with extended residencies with the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

About the Silk Road Project

The Silk Road Project is a not-for-profit arts organization founded in 1998 by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who serves as its artistic director, and led by Laura Freid, executive director and CEO. The Project has a vision of connecting the world's neighborhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around the globe. Inspired by the cultural traditions of the historic Silk Road, the Silk Road Project is a catalyst promoting innovation and learning through the arts.

Ford Motor Company Fund, the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company, is continuing as a Global Corporate Partner to the Silk Road Project as part of its long-standing tradition of arts education support.

Other sponsors include Mikimoto and the U.S. Department of State. The Silk Road Project is affiliated with Harvard University and Rhode Island School of Design.