



#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: John Michael Kennedy, JMKPR

[jmk@jmkpr.com](mailto:jmk@jmkpr.com) or 781-620-1761

## **THE REVOLVING MUSEUM’S “PROJECT SOAR” JOINS COMMUNITIES TO BUILD AND FLY WORLD’S LARGEST PAPER AIRPLANE, AIMING FOR A GUINNESS WORLD RECORD**

*The 64-foot flyer, aided by thousands across the region, will attempt lift-off and flight at Fitchburg Municipal Airport on June 12, 2018 (Rain Date: June 14, 2018)*

*City of Fitchburg, 20 regional Rotary Clubs and local colleges are among municipalities, businesses and educators who are taking part and involving students*

**FITCHBURG, MASS.** – Revised May 6, 2018 – Led by this city’s Revolving Museum and its founder Jerry Beck, PROJECT SOAR is enlisting more than 5,000 young people, artists, engineers, business and civic leaders, and citizens across the region to help design and build a 64-foot paper airplane to be launched at Fitchburg Municipal Airport June 12 with the goal of breaking a Guinness World Record.

Beck says the project, three years in the making, was sparked by his ten-year-old daughter’s folding and tossing of a paper plane that got the pair thinking how large such a simple flying machine could get. Their research revealed the current Guinness World Record for largest paper airplane was set by Germany’s Braunschweig Institute of Technology in 2013. It measured just over 59.7 feet.

With Fitchburg’s history as a hub of manufacturing and paper-making, the project seemed particularly relevant to Beck. The name PROJECT SOAR grew from his hope that the effort could ignite community engagement and help the economically troubled former mill city on its path back to vibrancy.

“It developed as a poetic and creative way to connect Fitchburg’s past, present and future,” Beck says. “This city was once a world-renown leader in industry and paper-making. Then economic changes set in and we went into a severe period of decline. But now we are seeing a renaissance... artists, young people, educators and city leaders are working to create a booming creative economy that we hope improves the quality of life for everyone.”

Over the past three years Beck, the Revolving Museum team, and local volunteers have done research, identified aviation and engineering experts, met city and regional leaders, reached out to communities in Worcester County (and beyond), raised funds from regional businesses, obtained support from the Fitchburg Cultural Council, and collected materials for the plane. In a poignant turn that underlined PROJECT SOAR’s mission, Beck got hold of the last rolls of paper produced by the historic Crocker Paper

Company before it went out of business in 2015. Additional paper has been donation by Caraustar Paper Company, the last-remaining paper manufacturer in Fitchburg,

“I appreciate how PROJECT SOAR responds to Fitchburg’s industrial revolution and the mills that lined the Nashua River here,” said Fitchburg Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale, who has supported a city partnership with the project since the start. “This community-built paper airplane is a meaningful catalyst that encourages young people to learn about Fitchburg’s history, be artistic, build new skills, feel a sense of pride, and be part of a larger community initiative. The City of Fitchburg is proud to present to the world this public artwork and aviation feat that showcases the talents and determination of our citizens.”

Another lead partner, Rotary International District 7910, has involved more than 20 regional clubs in PROJECT SOAR through its Rotaract young adult leaders initiative. District Rotary and Rotaract Clubs are engaging hundreds of students from dozens of regional high schools throughout the project.

“Rotary’s young adult members are excited, inspired and honored to be a collaborative partner for this unique project,” says Rotary District Governor Karin Gaffney. “PROJECT SOAR has all the key components that align with Rotary’s mission – it embraces strong education and science learning, and lifts the community by engaging volunteers, promoting diversity and empowering young people.”

The body of the plane will be constructed from bamboo, corrugated cardboard and paper. Visual artists, poets and others have led community workshops to build support for the project and create artworks to adorn the plane. Fifty student teams from classrooms around the area already have made artworks on paper that address issues they want to change in their communities such as racism and sexism, discrimination and violence, drugs and addiction, pollution and poverty. The artworks will be framed in black and attached to the plane’s wings, body, and tail fins, giving the look of stained-glass.

Regional community groups have transformed vintage and modern photographs, comics, newspapers, stamps, factory timecards, sewing patterns -- even homework -- to make artwork for the plane.

Fitchburg High School teacher Coraly Rivera says her students were fascinated to discover all the different types of paper – and what could be done with it. “Their drawings on sandpaper about stopping racism and bullying really got them thinking about the connections between their ideas and their materials -- and the power of art to communicate meaning,” Rivera said.

PROJECT SOAR involves thousands of students, faculty, and staff from Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, Boston University College of Fine Arts, Fitchburg High School, McKay Arts Academy, Sizer School, Fitchburg/Leominster Boys and Girls Club, and other schools and programs. In addition, the project will include 50 artists and poets creating new works for the project.

After its inaugural flight on June 12 at the Fitchburg Airport (Rain Date: June 14), the airplane from PROJECT SOAR and other materials are planned to be part of a traveling exhibition to be seen at airports and public locations around the region.

**The Revolving Museum** is a collaborative public art and nomadic non-profit cultural organization dedicated to the creation of public art projects, exhibitions, educational programs, performances and

events that encourage collaboration, experimentation, and a meaningful dialogue between artists, youth, and community members. To further its mission, The Revolving Museum:

- Revitalizes Abandoned and or Underutilized Public Spaces
- Creates Innovative Educational Programs and Projects for Youth
- Promotes Cultural Diversity, Collaboration and Social Change
- Encourages Arts Advocacy and Activism
- Integrates Ecological and Green Practices
- Inspires Community Engagement and Economic Development

### **PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS**

Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, Boston University School for the Arts, Fitchburg High School, Longsjø Middle School, McKay Arts Academy, Sizer School, Fitchburg & Leominster Boys and Girls Club, St. Bernard's Elementary School, St. Anna School, Beyond Benign, Warner Babcock Institute of Green Chemistry, Leominster Boy Scout Troop 12, Arlington Center for the Arts, Arlington High School, Littleton High School, Tracie Pouliot and the Chair City Community Workshop, The ASPIRE Program at Seven Hills Foundation, Adolescent Wellness, Inc., The Rotary Club of Acton-Boxboro, The Rotary Club of Bedford, The Rotary Club of Concord, The Rotary Club of Framingham, The Rotary Club of Gardner, The Rotary Club of Southbridge, The Rotary Club of Wellesley, The Rotary Club of Worcester, The Rotary District 7910 Youth Services Committee, The Rotaract Club of Greater Boston, The Rotaract Club of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, The Interact Club of Framingham, The Interact Club of Greater Gardner, The Interact Club of Baypath Technical Vocational High School, The Interact Club of Wellesley, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Rotary Eastern States Student Exchange, LUK Inc., Nue View Communities, Dawson Elementary School.

# # #

**MEDIA INFORMATION:** Interviews, photos and information are available now thru the PROJECT SOAR launch. For a list of local community events and details on the project, reach John Michael Kennedy at [jmk@jmkpr.com](mailto:jmk@jmkpr.com), or call 781-620-1761 (office) or 212-842-1752 (cell).



*Community groups, students, and families have been part of PROJECT SOAR workshops around the region. Photos courtesy Revolving Museum.*



## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*PROJECT SOAR is dedicated to the memory of Bob Harmon.*

### COMMENTS ABOUT PROJECT SOAR

- “This is an example of another wonderful school/community partnership enhancing the opportunities for our students through arts and innovation. Many thanks to Jerry and the Revolving Museum.” -- **Fitchburg Public Schools Superintendent Andre Ravenelle**
- “This project is another way to bring the university community together with our partners in the city and region. We are honored to be part of such an inspiring undertaking.” --**Fitchburg State University President Richard S. Lapidus**
- “Everyone from the students to the faculty and staff of Mount Wachusett Community College are excited to be a part of this project. Not only does it provide an educational component to our students’ experiences at the Mount, it adds a significant amount of fun.” -- **James Vander Hooven, President, Mount Wachusett Community College**

### PROJECT SOAR SUPPORTERS

PROJECT SOAR is supported in part by a grant from the Fitchburg Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. Additional support for PROJECT SOAR comes from Skyline Flight, Enterprise Bank, Fitchburg Public Schools, Minuteman Press, Peter Keto, Joe Mello, Adolescent Wellness Inc., Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, Wass-Arthur Signs, ACHLA Designs, Northend Subaru/ Mazda, David Beck, Elite Construction & Design, Gallery Sitka, Babineau Insurance Agency, Black Bear Coatings and Concrete, Boys and Girls Clubs of Fitchburg and Leominster, Central Mass Oral Surgery, Country Pizza, Fitchburg Public Schools, Can-Am Machinery Inc., Carastar, Great Wolf Lodge, Heat Trace Products, The Home Depot, John B. Barrett Estate and Municipal Law, Sizer School, Utz Snacks, Wachusett Mountain Ski Resort, Workers Credit Union, Jack Welch & Carburetor City, Boston University School of the Arts, Kevin and Nancy Whittemore, Jason & Elizabeth Mearls, Steve Levy, Seaboard Folding Company, Boulder Art Gallery, Ron Bouchard’s Auto Stores, Fidelity Bank, WS Beauty Supply, ADD-A-SIGN, The Boy Scouts, Beacon of Hope, LUK Inc., IC Federal Credit Union, Sandra and Jacki Beck, Robyn Buchwald, Ed Beck, D & G Graphics, New Vue Communities, Rodgers Printing, and others.

### PLANE-MAKING TEAM

Jack Welch, Joe Mello, Scott Houle, Alex Freeman, and John Gentile.