**PRESS RELEASE**

AIA Michigan

The Beaubien House

553 East Jefferson Avenue

Detroit, MI 48226

**Contact:**

Christine Zylla Lovstrom

313-965-4100/ FAX: 313-965-1501

mailto: [christine@aiami.com](mailto:christine@aiami.com)

**Photos available online at:** [**Stair**](http://aiamichigan.wildapricot.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1319202)[**Week 2014 webpage**](http://aiamichigan.wildapricot.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1758408)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Stair Week in Michigan– Four Months After Kickoff

January 6, 2014: In response to “Stair Week West Michigan”, the leaders of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Michigan, US Green Building Councils of the West Michigan and Greater Detroit Regions, and the International Interior Design Association Michigan have stated their support of the stair campaign. Stair Week West Michigan raised a significant amount of awareness on health, design and the environment. Stair Week 2014 is scheduled for September 8-12, 2014.

The cold winter weather sends many Michiganders indoors this time of the year. Americans, on average, spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As a result, where we work, live, learn and play indoor matters. As outdoor winter sports are not suitable for everyone, climbing stairs and walking indoor circuits could be substituted for active, outdoor recreation in freezing temperatures. “There is no better time than winter to appreciate good building design. We are all paying more attention to the criteria of the LEED Pilot Credit – Design for Active Occupants,” observes Joyce Lee, FAIA, LEED AP, Founder of Stair Week.

"As architects we know that no part of the world we design is too small, or too ordinary, to matter. Stair Week reminds us of this in a practical, inspiring, and healthy way," says Paul Dannels, FAIA, President of AIA Michigan.

In one example of this principle, the O-I Global Headquarters in Perrysburg, Ohio, designed by Albert Kahn Associates, is perched on a hill, creating room for ice-storage and enhancing energy efficiency. From choosing the location for the building site, to selection of color palettes, materials and finishes, every design decision placed an emphasis on both sustainability and creation of a relaxing and communal atmosphere. A monumental central staircase illuminated by skylights serves to break down hierarchy barriers and promote teamwork, collaboration and camaraderie.

At the Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital, visitors enter into an environment that emphasizes the preservation of health as much as the treatment of illness. Connecting the diagnostic and treatment areas and the inpatient lodges are two, 3-story daylit atriums with more than 2,000 live trees and plants. Main Street, the hospital’s central corridor, offers imaging services, retail shops with a wellness theme, a café, a culinary demonstrative kitchen and a wellness center that bridges integrative and traditional medicine to offer a full spectrum of therapeutic options. Both aforementioned buildings received LEED Silver certification.

“Stairs, where located at the heart of a building, are a delightful way not only to understand and connect with the physical environment, but to also engage with other occupants within the facility. Occupants are not coerced into healthy behaviors, instead it occurs naturally by using the building the way it was designed – people choose the stairs over the elevator because that is where the action and interest is.”,” says Jeffrey Gaines, AIA, LEED AP, Director of Sustainability and Urban Planning at Albert Kahn Associates and Chair of the US Green Building Council Greater Detroit Region.

“This represents a paradigm shift from the traditional health management into assuring wellness. Healthy communities are no longer the solo responsibility of public health professionals but a shared collaboration with architects, city planners and many others that work together to establish a community conducive of all opportunities to live well,” says Dr. Mouhanad Hammami, MD, Wayne County Health Officer.

For those who enjoy the cold weather, the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy (DRFC) provides ample opportunities for active recreation, like walking, jogging and cross country skiing in the winter.

“The Detroit riverfront is a four-season attraction that people visit year-round,” said Faye Alexander Nelson, President and CEO of the DRFC. “Our Operations team does a phenomenal job ensuring that the RiverWalk and the 1.5-mile Dequindre Cut Greenway are kept clear of snow and ice so visitors can enjoy our public spaces during the winter. For a lot of people, there’s nothing like an invigorating walk or run along the Detroit riverfront on a brisk, sunny winter’s day or enjoying quality family time during one of our many diverse outdoor program offerings.”

There will be more indoor recreation options coming in 2014: the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be the anchor tenant in the newly-re-imagined, historic Globe Building. Located along Atwater Street near the Dequindre Cut Trail and the Detroit riverfront, the DNR is constructing an adventure and discovery center within the manufacturing facility, which was originally constructed in 1892. Envisioned by the planners are a rock-climbing wall, an interpretive forest, archery range and classroom space, the facility will be a gift to the young and not-so-young citizens of Detroit.

“Across the country, architects and allied professionals could be the local leaders to convene the professional and community partnerships needed to work with local governments to craft and implement healthy complete neighborhoods now. The state of Michigan is setting a fine example,” says Bill Roschen, FAIA, Chair, AIA Design and Health Leadership Group and Past President, Los Angeles City Planning Commission.

More information about Stair Week 2014 and new building features will be available in the coming months.

The American Institute of Architects Michigan, headquartered in the historic Beaubien House across from the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, strives to bring to public attention the value and importance of architectural excellence and to recognize those whose notable achievements encourage all to make excellence in architecture the standard.

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