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“Ask Me Philadelphia” Campaign Launched

PHILADELPHIA – May 12, 2005 – After months of anticipation, Luke Klein, a Philadelphia native and the executive director of Ask Me Philadelphia, today announced the launch of the group’s button campaign, which aims to improve the experience of visitors to the city.

Through this campaign, Ask Me Philadelphia is encouraging Philadelphians to wear or display buttons that invite tourists to ask the wearer for recommendations and directions. Klein explained, “We’re trying to create the sense for visitors to Philadelphia that they’re here visiting friends—lots of friends. You don’t need to know everything about the city to wear the button. You just have to be ready to help out as well as you can with directions to the art museum or a recommendation for a good restaurant. It’s really more about the importance of human interaction than about any particular results.” The buttons are available free of charge on the group’s web site: askmephiladelphia.com.

On the Ask Me Philadelphia web site (askmephiladelphia.com), Klein describes the origin of the idea in his experience both as a traveler in other cities and as a proud Philadelphian:

“Like many Philadelphians, I love my native city. I am proud of the diversity of rich cultural activities and experiences that are available in Philadelphia. When friends visit from afar, I insist on introducing them to at least a few of the wonders of this city, and I welcome the opportunity to assist any tourists that I encounter here.

I have also traveled extensively around the world. While I have often enjoyed the challenge of figuring out how to make my way through foreign cities—sometimes in places where I could only say ‘hello’ and ‘thank you’ in the native language—I have also been saved many times by helpful citizens who have extended to me or made themselves accessible to inquiry. Kind and helpful citizens of foreign places have not only assisted me in getting to the train or the bank, but they have often dramatically improved my perceptions of a place.

I know a great many proud and knowledgeable Philadelphians who are always glad to assist visitors. The goal of the Ask Me Philadelphia button is to encourage the sense among visitors that there are friendly and helpful natives available to assist them. A caring interaction can really make a difference to a visitor, and we Philadelphians can have a great time with it too!”

A portion of any proceeds that may be received in support of Ask Me Philadelphia will be donated to local charities that provide assistance to Philadelphians in need. In addition, Ask Me Philadelphia will soon release buttons in a variety of other languages, so that tourists whose first language is not English will be able to spot helpful Philadelphians who are ready to assist them in their native tongue. Ask Me Philadelphia hopes to further expand this campaign through collaboration with both public and private institutions in Philadelphia.

Although the program is focused primarily on real interaction between tourists and Philadelphians, Ask Me Philadelphia is currently developing its web site (askmephiladelphia.com) as an additional resource for tourists. After this phase of the project is unveiled, tourists will be able to send questions to a panel of knowledgeable Philadelphians. The responses of the panel will be posted and organized in order to create an encyclopedia of tips and suggestions from real Philadelphians.

The Ask Me Philadelphia campaign has been well received. Klein added, “Everyone I’ve talked to about this project has stories either of being assisted by a friendly person in another city or of approaching a tourist in Philadelphia to offer assistance. We Philadelphians may have our complaints about the city, but deep down we love it, and I think that’s the attitude that will shine through in this program. I encourage everyone to log on to askmephiladelphia.com for their free button.”

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