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Ribbon cutting ceremony held for Naper Settlement’s new Mary and Richard Benck Family Agriculture Center

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NAPERVILLE, IL — On Sunday, April 23, Naper Settlement held a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating its new Mary and Richard Benck Family Agriculture Center. The Mary and Richard Benck Family Agriculture Center, a state-of-the-art STEM driven center for learning, showcases Naperville’s rich agricultural history while connecting it to the farming story of the region and the nation. Among those in attendance at the event to celebrate the new building were donors, community members, and public officials, including Representative Janet Yang Rohr and Senator Laura Ellman.

Housed within the building is the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) STEM Learning Lab. This lab will serve approximately 25-30 students at one time and 275-325 per day. In partnership with the Illinois Soybean Association, the new “Field Watchers” program will virtually connect students to farmers in Illinois while providing inquiry-based learning and experimentation in agronomy.

During the field trip to the museum, students become “Field Watchers” learning about soybean plants, virtually connecting to “Field Partner” farmers, and potting a soybean plant. Back in the classroom, the program continues as students monitor their plants and connect remotely to learn more from Field Partner farmers. Students will learn how farmers use science and technology to produce the foods we enjoy, how these processes and uses changed throughout history, as well as how the plant itself has changed or been modified over time. The program also encourages students to consider careers in agriculture or agri-business. In its first year, 2,500 students will go through the program supported by the Illinois Soybean Association.

The Mary and Richard Benck Family Agriculture Center marks a new chapter for the museum as it enters Phase II of the Never Settle Capital Campaign. In addition to the Field Watchers program, Naper Settlement is currently creating new exhibits and interactive experiences to inspire the next generation of professionals in agriculture.

About Naper Settlement
Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor living history museum set on 13 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville. Located 30 miles from Chicago, the museum is home to thirty-one historical structures dating back as early as the 1830s. Featuring exhibits,
special events, educational programming and more, Naper Settlement is where history comes alive and the community comes to connect. For more information, visit www.napersettlement.org or call (630) 420-6010.