LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM 91 ORCHARD STREET NEW YORK 212.431.0233 WWW.TENEMENT.ORG

CONTACT: Kira Garcia 212.431.0233, ext. 235
David Eng 212.431.0233, ext. 231

LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM TO CELEBRATE COMPLETION OF NEW VISITOR AND EDUCATION CENTER WITH NATURALIZATION CEREMONY

New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer Join as Sixteen New York Residents Take Oath of Citizenship

September 12 2011, New York, NY – On September 20, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum will celebrate the completion of its Sadie Samuelson Levy Immigrant Heritage Center with a naturalization ceremony for 16 immigrants as they become United States Citizens. The ceremony will mark the beginning of a new chapter for these citizens and for the Museum, as it inaugurates its new Visitor and Education Center at 103 Orchard Street.

For more than twenty years, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum has celebrated the American immigrant experience through its thought-provoking tours of the historic tenement building at 97 Orchard Street on New York's Lower East Side. This ceremony will be the first of its kind for the Museum, reflecting the institution's commitment to connecting our nation's immigrant heritage to the present day. The diverse group of new citizens will become part of history as they follow in the footsteps of more than 7,000 immigrants who made their homes at 97 Orchard between 1863 and 1935.

The ceremony will be officiated by Judge Robert Allen Katzmann of the Federal Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York. Judge Katzmann, the son of a refugee from Nazi Germany and grandson of immigrants from Russia, is an advocate for the improvement of legal representation for immigrants.

The ceremony will be followed by remarks from Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer.

The Sadie Samuelson Levy Immigrant Heritage Center

"We're deeply honored to be celebrating with sixteen of our nation's newest citizens on this exciting day," said Morris Vogel, President of the Tenement Museum. "Our Museum links the stories of our nation's immigrant ancestors to those of our own families, neighbors and friends. This event will reflect our mission, paying tribute to our nation's rich past while celebrating its vibrant future."

"The Lower East Side Tenement Museum preserves an important part of the New York City's storied immigrant history," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin. "The City was pleased to support this public-private partnership, which gives the Museum more space to present its dynamic programs to New Yorkers and visitors from around the world."

About the Sadie Samuelson Levy Immigrant Heritage Center

Funding for this project was provided by the Leon Levy Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council and the Office of the Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, and many other generous individual donors and foundations. The Center is located at 103 Orchard Street, across from the current Visitor Center and Museum Shop.

The new space features:

• **10,000 additional square feet** of operating space for the Museum
• **State-of-the-art "smart" classrooms** allowing the Museum to offer its award-winning education programs to many more K-12 students and English language learners
• **A demonstration kitchen** providing space for programs on immigrant foodways
• **A theater space** screening a new original film about the Museum and the neighborhood
• **A learning gallery** featuring temporary exhibitions related to the Museum's mission

Originally constructed as three separate tenements in 1888, 103 Orchard Street has undergone significant architectural changes through its lifetime, reflecting the evolving landscape of the city. It is now a contributing structure in the National Register of Historic Places' Lower East Side Historic District. The Museum purchased the building in 2007 and broke ground in March of 2010.

Through a renovation project led by Perkins Eastman Architects, the Museum has restored the building's structural integrity and created a series of vibrant, adaptable spaces to serve its visitors.

True to its mission, the Tenement Museum has taken an adaptive reuse approach to the project. The renovation has revealed the building's fascinating history, and the museum has retained original and period elements whenever possible. These include early twentieth-century signage preserved in near-mint condition.

About the New Programming

The new Center will allow the Museum to significantly expand its programming. It will provide enlarged space for the Museum's popular "Tenement Talks" program, which connects visitors with some of today's most relevant and engaging writers, artists and thinkers through free discussions, readings and other presentations.

The Center's demonstration kitchen provides a venue for the Museum's nascent culinary program, which introduces visitors to the rich variety and cultural significance of American immigrant foodways.

A new learning gallery will feature exhibitions of visual art related to the Museum's mission. The inaugural exhibition will feature the work of photographer Harvey Wang.

About the Tenement Museum

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, founded in 1988, is located in a landmarked tenement building at 97 Orchard Street. The building was home to more than 7,000 immigrants from more than 20 nations between 1863 and 1935. Anchored in a neighborhood that has long been home to thousands of poor and working class people, the Tenement Museum is dedicated to using the history of its site as a tool for addressing issues that are still relevant today, including immigration. In 2008 the Museum was honored with the Preserve America Presidential Award and the National Medal for Museum Service.

###