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\$1.1 Million Gift From Tiffany for Smithsonian's National Gem Collection

The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History received a \$1.1 million gift from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation to establish a collection in its name as part of the museum's National Gem Collection. The gift will establish an endowment for the acquisition of important gemstones for the collection to be known as "The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Collection." The gift also will make possible the creation of an exhibition case to display these and other important gemstones in the National Gem Collection Gallery.

"This is a landmark event in the history of the National Museum of Natural History," said Cristián Samper, director of the National Museum of Natural History. "The National Gem Collection is the pre-eminent collection of its kind in America and this endowment will enhance the collection for generations to come. It is a remarkable gift to the nation and we applaud our partners at the Tiffany & Co. Foundation for their generosity."

The gems and minerals halls of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History are among the most visited museum galleries in the world, attracting more than five million visitors every year. The National Gem Collection, created in 1884, is renowned for its breadth of world-class precious gemstones including the renowned Hope Diamond, the most popular museum object in the world.

"We are very proud to establish this endowment at the U.S. National Gem Collection, which will support the Smithsonian in acquiring the precious and rare gemstones for which it is renowned," said Fernanda Kellogg, president of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation. "An important part of the history of Tiffany & Co. was gemstone pioneering and the introduction of new gems to the American public and this program mirrors this spirit."

The Tiffany & Co. Foundation is the grant-making entity of the internationally known jeweler Tiffany & Co., which was founded in 1837. The company and the foundation have been active supporters of the Smithsonian and the National Museum of Natural History and its National Gem Collection since 1983. The company supported the restoration of the Geology, Gem and Mineral Hall in 1988, and in 1990 it donated a kunzite necklace designed by Paloma Picasso to the National Gem Collection. Tiffany & Co. and its foundation also have supported other Smithsonian museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum; the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum; the Archives of American Art; and the National Museum of American History.

“The Tiffany & Co. Foundation endowment will enable us to acquire gemstones that may come along only once in a lifetime—pieces that would have previously eluded us,” said Jeffrey Post, curator of the National Gem Collection. “The gift will help us maintain the National Gem Collection's position as one of the world’s great repositories of rare gemstones.”

The National Gem Collection is part of the Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W., in Washington, D.C. Opened in 1910, the museum is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. It also fosters critical scientific research as well as educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists and curators to the public. It is the most visited natural history museum in the world. The museum’s Web site is www.mnh.si.edu.

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