



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cuyahoga Arts and Culture Trustees Name Executive Director

The board of trustees of Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC) today named Karen Gahl-Mills to head CAC, the public funding mechanism that supports arts and cultural organizations in Cuyahoga County. Trustees, in a unanimous vote taken during this morning's regular, public meeting, appointed Ms. Gahl-Mills, currently the president and executive director of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, to a four-year term as CAC executive director. Ms. Gahl-Mills takes the reins of CAC at a critical time for an organization that, in fewer than three years, has become one of the nation's top five sources of local public funding for arts and culture. To date, 145 Cuyahoga County organizations have been awarded CAC grants (General Operating Support, Project Support, and Special Initiative grants) worth a combined total of more than \$33.5 million.

Steven A. Minter, president of the CAC board, praised not only the rigor of the search process, which attracted interest from dozens of arts and cultural professionals from around the county, but also the board's selection of Ms. Gahl-Mills, who will formally begin her CAC tenure in February 2010. "We are delighted that Karen Gahl-Mills has accepted our invitation to join us in Cuyahoga County. Thanks in great part to a recruitment process that has been incredibly thorough and, in many ways, incredibly instructive, I am confident that we have identified a superb candidate—one who will be an effective executive director for CAC, an excellent resource for our region's arts and cultural organizations, and an asset to the broader community as well."

Ms. Gahl-Mills brings two decades of leadership in arts administration to her new post at CAC. A vocalist and former cellist who holds an MBA from the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, Ms. Gahl-Mills' experience spans both for-profit and not-for-profit industries and disciplines ranging from strategic planning to marketing and communications to finance.

Ms. Gahl-Mills has headed the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra since 2006. As the chief executive officer of the largest cultural organization in Central New York, Ms. Gahl-Mills manages an annual budget of \$7 million and a thirty-nine week season that presently

November 10, 2009

Page 2

reaches more than 225,000 people each year through 200 full-orchestra and ensemble concerts in eighteen New York counties. In Syracuse as in her earlier role with the Westchester Philharmonic in suburban New York City, Ms. Gahl-Mills has been recognized for her innovative efforts to embed arts and cultural institutions in the communities that they serve and for her success in developing strategic collaborations with organizations ranging from Syracuse University to local chapters of the Alzheimer's Association and Habitat for Humanity. Her February 2010 start date will place her in Cleveland and at CAC in time to be actively involved in the 2011-2012 General Operating Support (GOS) award process, which commences with a mid-February "Intent to Apply" deadline.

Chris Coburn, who chaired the CAC trustees' search, thanked his fellow board members for their hard work and commended what he called "an outstanding pool of candidates . . . passionate, competent professionals who recognize the enormous potential of CAC and its capacity to strengthen Cuyahoga County's vibrant arts and cultural sector." Mr. Coburn continued, "We are confident that in Karen Gahl-Mills, we have selected a skilled administrator and hands-on leader who will be a force for the growth of the arts and cultural sector in bolstering the economy in our region for years to come."

Mr. Minter added, "Having allocated more than \$33.5 million in just over two years, CAC has established itself as a vital resource for organizations and institutions throughout the region, and a particularly valuable tool as world-renowned treasures and neighborhood groups alike navigate the challenges of the current economy. Ms. Gahl-Mills' intimate understanding of these challenges—and the success with which she has met them in Syracuse—are certain strengths. Her extensive experiences as an administrator, her own artistic training, and the energy she brings to her work are among the numerous reasons we know she will lead CAC with distinction."

Ms. Gahl-Mills, on hand for the board vote, expressed her enthusiasm—and her deep regard for CAC's vision of a strong, vibrant, and diverse arts and cultural sector. "I am honored by the board's decision to bring me on board—and thrilled to be headed back to Northeast Ohio. Having spent my teenage years in this area, I have long known Cuyahoga County to be a wonderful place to live and work."

She continued, "The enormous pride that Greater Clevelanders take in their arts and cultural treasures is well deserved. Cuyahoga County's renowned arts institutions and the countless cultural events and programs to which this region is home are undoubtedly among the finest and most innovative anywhere. I am eager to get to work alongside trustees and staff, whose efforts to date have been exceptional. And, I look forward to contributing to the rigorous, ongoing process of establishing CAC, not simply as a source of significant financial support for the organizations and institutions that compose Northeast Ohio's stellar arts and cultural sector, but also as a dynamic, relevant force within the larger community."

Cuyahoga Arts and Culture makes grants using public funds to support the arts and cultural assets that enrich the lives of the citizens of Cuyahoga County and enhance the community's appeal. Details of CAC grantmaking to date are included in the *2009 Report* to the Community available on the CAC website.

For additional information about Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, visit www.cacgrants.org.

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