

September 18, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MOUNT VERNON, Illinois - The board of trustees of Cedarhurst Center for the Arts has announced the appointment of Hillary Settle Esser as the museum's next executive director. Esser, a native of southern Illinois, formerly served as director of development at Cedarhurst.

"We are thrilled to have Hillary move into the executive director position on our Cedarhurst team" said Doug Kroeschen, chairman of the John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell Foundation board of trustees and interim executive director. "She has been a key component on the leadership team for 10 years and proven herself to be hardworking, enthusiastic, and creative. The board has great confidence in Hillary's dedication to the success of Cedarhurst and its mission to generate participation and support for the arts," stated Kroeschen.

"It will be an honor to serve Cedarhurst and our community as the Executive Director of this wonderful organization. We have an extraordinary staff and board of trustees, dedicated volunteers, and a loyal base of supporters. These people are what makes our museum thrive, and I am grateful for the role they play in bringing the arts to life for the people of southern Illinois," Esser said.

Esser has served as Director of Development for Cedarhurst since 2010. During that time her primary responsibilities included raising funds for museum programs, expanding the Cedarhurst patron base, and raising awareness about Cedarhurst's mission and programs throughout the region.

"The arts play a vital role in community development, cultural awareness, and quality of life," Esser said. "I am grateful to Cedarhurst's previous director Sharon Bradham for hiring me many years ago, and I look forward to building on the vision of our founders John and Eleanor Mitchell."

Esser grew up in Jefferson County and graduated from Mt. Vernon Township High School. She earned a Bachelor of Arts from Eastern Illinois University, and a Master of Public Administration, with focus in nonprofit management, from University of Illinois-Springfield.

Esser is heavily involved in the Mt. Vernon community. She is active with Mt. Vernon Rotary, serving as Club President from 2015-2016; First United Methodist Church, serving as co-chair of Church Council since 2017; and the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce. She was named Young Professional of the Year by the Chamber in 2015.

Esser is married to Josh Esser, a CPA and partner at Krehbiel and Associates, LLC; and they have an 18-month old daughter, Madeline.

Cedarhurst, located in Mt. Vernon, offers the region many art engagement opportunities, programs and events, as well as art classes for all ages. Five galleries in the Mitchell Museum and Shrode Art Center feature intriguing art exhibitions as well as prominent works of art from the museum's permanent collection. The outdoor gallery, the Goldman-Kuenz Sculpture Park, features over 70 large scale sculptures. Cedarhurst is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday throughout the year.