

Desert Caballeros Western Museum
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HARRIS DEPARTS FROM DCWM POST

Peter Schweitzer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Desert Caballeros Western Museum announced this week that the Board regrettably accepted the resignation of Sandra Harris as Executive Director. In Schweitzer's announcement, he praised the successes achieved at the Museum during Harris' tenure: "The Museum has expanded its professional staff, modernized its use of technology across departments and grown the membership and donor base to establish more long-term sustainability."

Chosen by the Smithsonian Institution as a national affiliate in 2016, the Museum has continued to bring national attention to Wickenburg with its innovative blend of art and history interpretation. Another year of engaging exhibitions and programs has already been confirmed and launches this month with genres and topics sure to please audiences from all backgrounds. Staff is also working with museum design firm Quatrefoil on exciting updates for the beloved downstairs history exhibitions to include Wickenburg oral histories, historic photos, and a permanent spotlight on one of Arizona's most significant quilt collections. The project slated for December completion has been generously funded by a grant from the Wellik Foundation and a gift from the estate of Alex and Jane Boyd.

During Harris' tenure the Museum has thrived; it has been recognized each year with community engagement grant awards from the Arizona Commission on the Arts with

additional grant awards coming from Arizona Humanities, the Arizona Historical Society, Arizona State Historical Records Advisory Board, and the Phoenix Suns. Major gifts from benefactor Bobbye Rogers have provided crucial general operating and adult education funds each year.

Serving over 60,000 visitors a year, the Museum remains a major force in the local economy providing national marketing for the area in part through use of distributions of the Town of Wickenburg Bed Tax income and direct support for local businesses selling goods, services, and meals to Museum visitors.

The Museum's signature event, *Cowgirl Up! Art from the Other Half of the West*, continued successfully under Harris' tenure, showcasing the significant contributions of women Western artists to the genre of Western American art. Another roster of 58 outstanding artists for the 13th Annual *Cowgirl Up!* is almost confirmed with opening weekend set for March 23-25, 2018.

The highly successful annual fundraiser *heART of the West* gala continues for its 5th year and will honor lifetime achievements of artist Cynthia Rigden at a dinner and live auction on Saturday, January 27th, 2018 in the Cultural Crossroads Learning Center

The Museum is committed to continuing to build one of the finest Western art collections in the nation by adding artworks from renowned artists to its permanent collection. The restricted endowment set up for this purpose by long-time benefactors Aiken and Jane Fisher will be expanded with more fundraising in this area going forward.

Harris came to the Museum as Interim Director in September 2014 after consulting on the Western Spirit: Scottsdale Museum of the West project prior to its successful opening. A graduate of the Museum Studies program at ASU, Harris has worked in history,

anthropology, and art museums since 1990 at institutions in Arizona, Nevada, California, and North Carolina, including the Arizona State Capitol Museum, The Liberace Foundation, The Neon Museum, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at UC Berkeley, and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University.

Harris has accepted a new post as Library Director for Maryville University in the St. Louis area, effective October 16, 2017. She will be part of the project to expand and transform the Library into an Innovation Center, a multidisciplinary hub for the campus serving almost 7,000 students. This is a return home for Harris who is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis.

Deputy Director and Curator Mary Ann Igna has been appointed as Interim Director of DCWM as the nationwide search is launched for a new Executive Director. Board of Directors Executive Committee member Sandy Chamberlain will chair the search committee.

Harris remains committed to fostering the success of the Desert Caballeros Western Museum, a vital community asset in Wickenburg. She is grateful for the support of the Board, staff, and community for the past three years in celebrating the Old West, the New West, and the Next West out Wickenburg Way.