

NEWS RELEASE

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Gadsden Cultural Arts Foundation Names Tom Banks as New Executive Director

GADSDEN, AL: The Board of Directors of the Gadsden Cultural Arts Foundation, Inc. recently named long-time Deputy Director Tom Banks as the organization's new Executive Director. He now leads all the Foundation's projects, including the Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts, Imagination Place Children's Museum, Etowah Youth Orchestras, Gadsden Community School for the Arts, and the Downtown Dance Conservatory.

In order to find the most qualified candidate, the board formed a transition committee in December. The committee spent nine months conducting a national search based upon specific qualifications and experience in non-profit arts management. At the conclusion of the search and interviews, the committee recommended to the full board at their September 12 meeting that Banks be tapped for the position, which was unanimously approved.

Board Chairman Christie Knowles said, "Tom brings many years of experience to his new role as Executive Director. Of all the candidates who applied, he is clearly the most qualified to lead our organization into the future. We are impressed by his vision and his passion for the work of the Foundation."

Banks first began working part-time at the Hardin Center in 1998 and assumed the full-time role of Deputy Director in 2005. During his tenure he has overseen many facets of the Foundation's operations, management, marketing, and fundraising efforts. A Gadsden native, he is highly involved in the community and has led many collaborations between the Foundation and other organizations.

"I am greatly honored by the confidence the board has placed in me as the new Executive Director," said Banks. "The work of the Foundation in improving the quality of life for those in our community through the arts is vital. I'm thrilled to be a part of that work and I could not dream of a more fulfilling career. I'm elated and I look forward to perpetuating the work that my predecessor, Bobby Welch, started as we continue to grow and evolve to best serve the community."

Bobby Welch began his role as Executive Director in 1988 in fundraising for what would become the Center for Cultural Arts in 1990. Over the past 30-plus years, Welch has led the organization

through many expansions in programming and offerings as he grew the Foundation to become a hub for community arts that now serves the larger region of northeast Alabama. Bobby is not going anywhere quite yet and is moving into a new role within the Foundation. He now focuses solely on fundraising for major and planned gifts. Welch has a wealth of resources available to assist donors as they explore large donations or leaving a lasting legacy to support the arts through a planned gift.

“I see a bright future ahead for the Foundation’s projects,” said Banks. “We have a wonderful staff of dedicated professionals in place. I appreciate their support as we move forward under my leadership. We also receive generous support from individual donors, corporations, the City of Gadsden, and the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Together we will continue to endeavor to make Gadsden an increasingly more creative and culturally-rich community.”

Learn more about the Foundation’s projects at culturalarts.org or by calling (256) 543-ARTS.

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Tom Banks, Gadsden Cultural Arts Foundation Executive Director

Photo by Eric T. Wright