



The Acorn Center for the Performing Arts selects Beth Kaskel as its next Executive Director

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PRESS RELEASE: The Board of Directors of **The Acorn**, a performing arts center in Michigan's Harbor Country that offers a broad range of high-quality arts and education programming, has unanimously approved the hire of **Beth Kaskel** as its next Executive Director.



Beth Kaskel is an arts management professional with 20 years of experience bringing communities together through the performing arts. Kaskel most recently served for six years as Director of Programming and Director of Operations for the world-renowned Auditorium Theatre in Chicago. Previous roles include General Manager for American Theater Company, and General Manager of Redmoon Theater. She also served on the Board of Directors of The League of Chicago Theaters from 2012-2018 and has held

leadership roles in numerous professional associations.

Kaskel is very familiar with the Three Oaks area, as her family has visited for many years. Kaskel spent many summer evenings at concerts in Dewey Cannon Park, walking through Warren Woods, dining at area restaurants – and yes, attending shows at The Acorn. She is delighted to relocate permanently to Harbor Country and looks forward to stepping into this exciting leadership role.

“Being entrusted to lead The Acorn into the next chapter of growth is an honor,” states Kaskel. “Performing arts play a vital role in making our world a better place. The Acorn’s mission of community engagement among residents and visitors of all ages resonates with me in its opportunity to enhance the local community. It will be incredibly exciting to have the privilege to present and produce the highest caliber programming at The Acorn. I look forward to meeting and working with the board, staff, artists, audiences, and local businesses and nonprofits who already love this great performing arts center, while also attracting new patrons and collaborators.”

Kaskel joins The Acorn as its second Executive Director, succeeding Sandra Thompson, who led the transition of The Acorn from a privately owned commercial venue to a successful mission-driven 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Under Thompson’s leadership, The Acorn vastly expanded its programming to more than 140 events annually, grew the patron base and added signature programs, such as *Acorn Anywhere!* outdoor concert series, Singer Songwriter and 10 Minute Play Writing Competitions, and one of the best Open Mic programs in the region which provide great opportunities for aspiring musicians to perform on The Acorn stage.

Kaskel has a BFA in Theatre Management from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and an MA in Performing Arts Administration from Roosevelt University. Her first official day as Executive Director of The Acorn is June 14, 2021.

“We are thrilled to bring a performing arts professional of Beth’s caliber to lead us into our next chapter as a nonprofit organization,” says Tom Abrahamson, Chair of The Acorn’s Board of Directors. “Beth possesses an extraordinary breadth of leadership experience, ranging from the avant-garde Redmoon Theater -- which was hailed by the *Chicago Tribune* as “impossibly inventive” and described by the *Chicago Sun-Times* as “one of the only theaters that can keep a 2-year-old and a 50-year-old equally enchanted and filled with wide-eyed wonder” -- to The Auditorium Theatre, established in 1889, and housed in a national historic landmark building, where she was responsible for world-class performers and events, such as David Byrne, Chance the Rapper, Neil Young, The Joffrey Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, the NFL Draft, *Louder than a Bomb*, Ira Glass, *The Jersey Boys*, and the speakers’ series *National Geographic Live*.

The Acorn’s Board of Directors retained nonprofit executive search firm KEES in December 2020. A comprehensive search was launched, and the search committee, led by Past Board Chair Kathy Stady, ultimately selected Beth Kaskel from an exemplary group of top finalists. The Acorn leadership wishes to thank the members of the search committee, including board members Bob Murphy, Tom Abrahamson, and Laura Jolly, as well as community members Phila Broich and Lisa Cripps-Downey.

Heather Eddy, President and CEO of KEES remarks “a huge thank you to the search committee. As a growing organization, the time, effort, and energy required for this hire were enormous, and all committee members rose to the challenge. Beth Kaskel will fit perfectly with the future vision of The Acorn and will lead it toward that vision, and beyond.”

The Acorn is the epicenter of the creative and performing arts of Harbor Country, drawing audiences from Chicago, northern Indiana, and southwest Michigan. The Acorn curates, highlights, and supports local talent while also welcoming renowned performers. Every performance year is filled with a breadth of diverse programming that ensures no two events are alike. The Acorn’s Mission: To offer a broad range of high-quality arts and education programming that nurtures cultural experience, participation and community engagement among residents and visitors of all ages and enhances the economic vitality of the region.

To learn more about The Acorn and its many artistic offerings, please visit www.acornlive.org.

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