|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Release embargoed until August 16, 2021** Contact: Lee Knisley Sanders, Ph.D., Interim Director  [lsanders@pyramidhill.org](mailto:lsanders@pyramidhill.org)/(513) 868-8336  *Photos available upon request* |

**Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park & Museum Names**

**Bryan W. Knicely Executive Director**

HAMILTON, OH (August 16, 2021)—Nanci Wilks Lanni, president of Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park & Museum's board of trustees, today announced that **Bryan W. Knicely** has been appointed the next Executive Director of the non-profit organization. Knicely's tenure begins September 13, 2021.

A respected arts administrator with more than 25 years of industry experience, Knicely is currently Executive Director of the Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM) in Billings, Montana. Having begun his arts administration career in 1995, Knicely brings to the role at Pyramid Hill a successful track record of creative and collaborative leadership, a passion for the Park's sculpture, antiquities, and grounds, and a deep appreciation for its board, staff, members, stakeholders, and community. As Executive Director, he will lead all aspects of the organization's operations, including curatorial oversight, administrative and financial management, fundraising, marketing, education, community engagement, and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

**Bryan W. Knicely**

"We are thrilled to name Bryan Knicely as the next Executive Director of Pyramid Hill," said Lanni. "He has impressive industry knowledge, and his collaborative leadership style will inspire the talent we have on our staff and board, as well as in our community. In addition, he possesses an unwavering belief that art in nature can transform lives and reinforce our shared humanity. We are confident that he will champion the Park's commitment to providing world-class art and programming, excellent visitor experiences, and accessibility for all audiences."

Knicely's appointment comes at a historic moment for Pyramid Hill, which will celebrate its 25th Anniversary in 2022. The Park has earned a reputation as a leader among sculpture parks due to its significant acreage, unique permanent collection, commitment to inclusion and public engagement, robust environmental practices, and fiscal health. Additionally, Pyramid Hill's 2019 acquisition of the National Register of Historic Places-listed Fortified Hill Earthworks, a 2,000-year-old Hopewell Culture hilltop enclosure in Butler County, will open next year.

Said Knicely, "It is truly an honor to have the opportunity to lead Pyramid Hill into its 25th Anniversary, as the Park plans major campus investments that will reimagine the visitor experience, attract new and diverse guests to the region, and encourage repeat visits. With the opening of Fortified Hill to the public, our shared goal is expansive community reach through one-of-a-kind cultural experiences and programming. This goal aligns perfectly with my life mission to provide opportunities for others to realize their creative potential through art and nature."

Knicely will succeed Lee Knisley Sanders, Ph.D., who has served as the Park's interim director since December 2020. Upon Knicely's appointment in September 2021, Sanders will transition to the role of advisor. Today's announcement concludes a nine-month national search, chaired by board member Mark Hecquet, with participation from the Park's board and staff, and conducted in partnership with the search firm Management Consultants for the Arts.

Search Committee Chair Hecquet added, "This search was exhaustive and comprehensive in scope. I extend my warmest thanks to the hardworking and committed search committee members, board, and staff, as well as Bill Appleton and Management Consultants for Arts, for their dedication and engagement throughout the process. As a result, we believe Bryan is uniquely positioned to lead Pyramid Hill successfully into its next quarter-century of extraordinary art experiences, expansive growth, and national renown."

Robin Pfeil, an arts consultant and former CEO of the Springfield Foundation and former Interim Director of Grants at the Greater Columbus Arts Council, praised Pyramid Hill's selection. "I've had the good fortune of working for and with Bryan over the past twenty-five years in several capacities," said Pfeil. "Bryan is an excellent museum director and a veteran in the arts management arena. He is an astute communicator and mediator and has left his imprint is on many innovative projects. Not only is Bryan passionate about sculpture, art, and artists, he also believes in pushing the boundaries of what is possible when combining art and nature, and in striving toward authentic connections with all audiences."

**About Bryan Knicely**

Bryan Knicely comes to Pyramid Hill from his role as Executive Director of the Yellowstone Art Museum (YAM). He led the museum's mission to exhibit, interpret, collect, and preserve art for the enrichment, education, inspiration, and enjoyment of all. While at YAM, Knicely created a living five-year strategic plan in conjunction with the board, staff, and community, oversaw the two most successful art auctions in the museum's history, increased the endowment to over $5 million, developed the Legacy Society giving program, and expanded the scope of the organization's international profile. He also worked collaboratively with Billings' cultural partners to increase offerings within the region and broadened partnerships with national foundations and art collections.

Knicely was the former Executive Director at the Evansville Museum of Art, History & Science from 2014 to 2018, Director of the Coral Springs Museum of Art from 2012 to 2014, and served as President of the Stonewall National Museum & Archives 2011-2012.

Prior to working in Florida, Knicely led the Greater Columbus Arts Council as President, where he served on cultural delegations to Germany, Denmark, Chile, and China (2006-2010). He also was the Assistant Director and ADA Coordinator of the Maine Arts Commission and received two governor's awards for outstanding leadership and service (2000-2006). In addition, Knicely worked as the business manager of Laumeier Sculpture Park and Museum in St. Louis in the late 1990s.

Knicely is the founder of (Re)Create Consulting, independently assisting non-profit groups, including arts and cultural institutions, to improve core organizational competencies to advance their missions. He has worked with the National Endowment for the Arts as a grants panelist, published several articles, and presented at both national and international conferences. He is a member of Americans for the Arts and the American Alliance of Museums.

Certified by the Harvard Business School in Performance Measurements for Effective Management of Nonprofit Organizations, Knicely also holds a Master of Arts degree in Arts Policy & Administration from The Ohio State University and a Bachelor of Science in Management & Marketing from Otterbein University. In addition, he is an avid art collector and amateur photographer and enjoys traveling to visit museums and historic cultural sites worldwide.

Knicely has recently purchased a home in Hamilton, Ohio, and looks forward to playing an active role in that community and the greater Cincinnati and Dayton regions.

**About Pyramid Hill**

*VISION: To inspire and educate our diverse visitors*

*in a world-renowned setting of art and nature*

*and to be a catalyst for*

*dialogue, collaboration, and contemplation.*

Pyramid Hill is a 350-acre sculpture park with nearly 80 monumental outdoor sculptures displayed in a landscape of rolling hills, meadows, lakes, and hiking trails. The Park also features an Ancient Sculpture Museum that displays Greek, Roman, Etruscan, Syrian and Egyptian artwork dating to 1550 B.C. The Museum Gallery hosts exhibitions by local, regional, and national artists. Pyramid Hill is also the only museum you can experience in an Art Cart. Attracting more than 70,000 visitors in 2020, Pyramid Hill serves as the largest cultural tourist attraction in Butler County.

Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum was founded on 40 acres of land and one man's vision and unwavering support. Harry T. Wilks (1925-2014) purchased the land in 1987 to build his home, the Pyramid House, and slowly began acquiring adjacent parcels of land, clearing space, building roads, hiking trails, and small lakes. Harry wished to preserve the land for future generations, which inspired him to create a non-profit sculpture park in 1997 that was accessible to the public and combined the beauty of nature with that of artwork.

Open 361 days a year, Pyramid Hill's acres of rolling hills, meadows, lakes, gardens, and miles of hiking trails provide the perfect backdrop to *Experience Art In Nature* in every season. In addition to the monumental outdoor sculptures and Ancient Sculpture Museum, the Park also features a pioneer house dating to the 1820s with an unusual arched ceiling. Specific detailed information regarding wildlife is available at the Park, and we offer several immersive nature and educational programs for children. <https://www.pyramidhill.org/>

**About Fortified Hill**

In 2019, the 2,000-year-old Hopewell cultural site known as Fortified Hill was purchased and then donated to Pyramid Hill by the Harry T. Wilks Family Foundation. As a result, the Ohio State Preservation Office of the Ohio Historical Connection presented its 2020 Award of Merit to the Foundation for preserving this rare archaeological and sacred American Indian site.

A steering committee including archaeologists, historians, American Indians from the Greater Cincinnati American Indian Coalition, members of the Pyramid Hill staff, and volunteers, as well as a groundswell of community support, is helping Pyramid Hill in its efforts to prepare the site for the public, with hiking trails and educational signage.

**Support for the Park**

Pyramid Hill's *Journey BOREALIS* sponsor for the 2021 season is the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation. The 2021 season is also made possible with support from ArtsWave, Ohio Arts Council, Hamilton Community Foundation, New Bremen Foundation, The Harry T. Wilks Family Foundation, and many generous individuals, businesses, and foundations.

Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum | 1763 Hamilton-Cleves Road, Hamilton, OH 45013

###