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**THE VAN WEZEL FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNOUNCE CHERYL MENDELSON AS NEW CEO**

*Chicago top executive brings more than 25 years of success in the arts and education*

**Sarasota, FL (January 15, 2019)** – Chicago-based arts and education executive Cheryl Mendelson has been appointed the new CEO of the Van Wezel Foundation. Board Chair Mike Martella made the announcement today that Mendelson will take the helm in February, bringing more than 25 years of fundraising, business development, and strategic planning to the Foundation.

“The appointment of Cheryl Mendelson is our next step toward realizing our vision of a new performing arts center for our great community,” said Martella. “After conducting an extensive national search, Cheryl’s breadth of expertise in developing successful philanthropic programs, coupled with her experience in growing the Harris Theater in Millennium Park into a nationally recognized venue of artistic importance, made her the perfect choice to lead the next chapter of the Van Wezel Foundation. Cheryl’s appointment will enable us to achieve our mission to create a world-class performing arts center that enriches the community, supports arts education, and inspires young minds.”

Mendelson’s career as a nonprofit executive has spanned across education, healthcare, and the arts, most recently as Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Chief Marketing Officer for Erikson Institute, the premier graduate school in child development, where she led the strategy and execution for all fundraising, marketing, and communications. Prior to Erikson, she spent 8 years as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at the Harris Theater. Mendelson is recognized as a thought leader in the branding and growth of the theater, including her critical role as chief architect for the \$38 million Imagine capital campaign. She also founded Access Tickets, a Harris Theater arts education program that partners with health and human service organizations and schools.

Career highlights also include raising more than \$150 million as Senior Vice President of Philanthropy and Marketing for the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, and Director of Annual Giving at the University of Chicago Booth Graduate School of Business.

“I am honored to lead the Van Wezel Foundation at such a pivotal time and to expand on the success of the current programs while helping bring to life the vision of a new performing arts center for Sarasota,” said Mendelson. “I am inspired by the generosity of the philanthropic community and the collaborative public and private partnerships committed to investing in the future. I’m eager to meet the members of the community and hear first-hand their ideas and goals to grow Sarasota’s reputation as a vibrant arts mecca along the Gulf Coast. My family and I are thrilled to embrace Sarasota as our new home.”

Mendelson serves as a Trustee of Kartemquin Documentary Films. She received her BA from the University of Massachusetts and completed the Management Institute program at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

For more information, go to [www.vwfoundation.org](http://www.vwfoundation.org). For press inquiries, contact Mike Marraccini at 941-914-5324 or at [mcm@largeinc.com](mailto:mcm@largeinc.com) to schedule interviews beginning on Wednesday, February 13, 2019.

**About Van Wezel Foundation**

The mission of the Van Wezel Foundation is to create a world-class performing arts center that enriches the community, supports arts education, and inspires young minds. Please visit our website at [vwfoundation.org](http://vwfoundation.org) for more information.

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