



SALISBURY
HOUSE  GARDENS

News Release

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Salisbury House Foundation identifies new leaders

DES MOINES, IA – The Salisbury House Foundation is pleased to announce new leadership. Effective immediately, J. Eric Smith joins the organization as Executive Director and Cyndi Pederson joins the staff as Deputy Executive Director.

"In our first twelve years, Salisbury House Foundation has achieved our initial objectives by purchasing the home and collections, and stabilizing the infrastructure of the estate at some considerable expense. We are very pleased to bring not one, but two outstanding individuals to Salisbury House to lead our organization into our next chapter of growth and achievement," said Mike Simonson, Board Chair for the foundation. "Eric and Cyndi offer diverse yet complimentary skills, and the board looks forward to supporting their efforts to make Salisbury House & Gardens accessible and relevant to the local community, Iowa and beyond."

J. Eric Smith joins the organization with over 26 years of leadership experience in the non-profit and government sectors in New York, Massachusetts, Idaho and Washington, DC. Before relocating to Iowa in late 2011, Mr. Smith most recently served as Executive Director of University Auxiliary Services at Albany, where he and his staff provided quality of life services to the State University at Albany, New York on a historic campus designed by architect Edward Durell Stone. In prior positions, he directed programming and operations at the Chapel + Cultural Center at Rensselaer in Troy, New York (a National Register of Historic Places site) and at the American Institute for Economic Research, located on a 110-acre campus in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. Mr. Smith is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, the Naval Supply Corps School, and the New York State University at Albany's Rockefeller College. He is a former active duty Naval Supply Corps Officer who served as a resource management and procurement director with the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. In the non-profit sector, Mr. Smith has served as a fundraiser, public relations specialist, operations manager and executive director. He is also a widely published print and online journalist. Locally, he writes for and administers Indie Moines (indiemoin.es.com), a website devoted to Iowa-centric cultural and creative criticism.

"Salisbury House is a regional treasure that richly deserves international acknowledgment and acclaim with its incredible collection of stories. I am delighted to be given the opportunity to tell those stories and to work with the Foundation's board and staff to not only preserve this architectural and artistic triumph, but also to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of the Weeks family by ensuring that their legacy and vision live on deep into the 21st Century," said J. Eric Smith. "I am also honored to have the opportunity to work with our accomplished new Deputy Executive Director, Cyndi Pederson, who brings to Salisbury House an extraordinary skill set in preservation, arts and cultural programming and management."

Cyndi Pederson joins the organization having most recently served the state of Iowa as the Director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for the past five years. Prior to that position, she worked as Chief of Staff to former First Lady Christie Vilsack at Terrace Hill, serving on the Governor's Senior Management team and the Governor's transition team. Ms. Pederson has 12 years of executive leadership in the state with a strong focus on historic preservation, non-profit management, arts and cultural awareness. At the Department of Cultural Affairs she was appointed to the Iowa Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission by the Governor and initiated the Department's first mobile museum called "History on the Move." The inaugural exhibit was focused on Lincoln's presence in Iowa in conjunction with the Lincoln Bi-Centennial and traveled statewide. She also gives back to the community by serving on the Young Women's Resource Center board, the After Schools Arts Program, (ASAP) and a regional arts board called Arts Midwest. Cyndi has an art education degree from Iowa State University and is a graduate of the Certified Public Management program from Drake University.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Salisbury team, and I am looking forward to using my diverse past work experiences and passions to further the mission of Salisbury House & Gardens," said Cyndi Pederson. "As a lifelong resident of Des Moines, I look forward to introducing Eric to this great community. We are both excited about the potential opportunities to showcase the educational experiences, art, history, entrepreneurship and the cultural legacies that the Weeks family left behind."

Furthered Mr. Smith, "Since the Salisbury House Foundation's inception, the organization's board members and staff have done a tremendous job stabilizing the property, re-establishing the 'Salisbury House' brand, and preserving, restoring and presenting the estate's amazing collection of art, architecture and rare literary books and documents. With this stabilization well advanced, I am looking forward to working with Cyndi to expand awareness of Salisbury House, both within Des Moines and beyond. As far as I am concerned, when people assess the great American homes of the late 19th and early 20th century, Salisbury House should be considered with the same reverence given to The Breakers, Hearst Castle, Fallingwater or The Biltmore Estate. My primary goal is to facilitate that level of recognition for this extraordinary property."

Salisbury House & Gardens is a private, non-profit organization governed by the Salisbury House Foundation. Located in the Salisbury Oaks Neighborhood in the heart Des Moines, Salisbury House & Gardens is historic house museum that is open to the public and welcomes thousands of guests each year for its cultural, historical, educational and social events. Completed in 1928, Carl and Edith Weeks modeled their country estate after the King's House in Salisbury, England. The 42 room English manor is filled with valuable collections from the Weeks family estate including art, literature, tapestries and other worldly items.

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J. Eric Smith
Executive Director
Salisbury House & Gardens



Cyndi Pederson
Deputy Executive Director
Salisbury House & Gardens



Salisbury House & Gardens New Leaders