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Cultural Leader Announces Retirement

Suzanne LeBlanc Sets May '23 Departure Date

Suzanne LeBlanc, president of Long Island Children's Museum will retire in May, ending her 17-year tenure at the helm of the nationally recognized institution.

LeBlanc has been working quietly with the board of trustees and Museum staff since last spring to prepare for the transition. During this timeframe, she has spearheaded succession planning and leadership training measures, completed organizational restructuring and seen the Museum rebound to pre-COVID numbers. These actions will enable the next LICM president to build upon a strong foundation of success as the Museum prepares to celebrate its 30th anniversary this fall.

"Long Island Children's Museum is enormously grateful for the leadership Suzanne LeBlanc has exhibited over the past 17 years. The mindful approach she has taken in planning her departure is exemplary of Suzanne's exceptional management and sensitive style," noted LICM Board Chair Scott Burman.

"Suzanne has led the Museum through some turbulent times, including hurricanes, a global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic; while also bringing the Museum to exceptional highs, championing the National Medal for Museum & Library Service, and earning 'Accredited Museum' status, an elite honor awarded to only three percent of museums in our nation."

Burman added, "It's been an honor to work with Suzanne, she will leave a long-lasting mark both on LICM and the children's museum community at large."

"It has always been a gift to have work that I love and that makes a difference in people's lives," notes LeBlanc. "Growing up I could never have imagined that I

would be leading an institution and had this career. I have enormous gratitude for my extraordinary mentors who saw my potential and helped all along the way, she adds." Concluding this portion of my career has been a difficult decision because of how much I will miss the LICM staff and board. But I know that the Museum is in a good place and good hands, and I can't wait to see what the next growth phase brings."

A Life in Museums

LeBlanc's professional life in museums began with a 3-month internship at the Boston Children's Museum, while studying for a planned career in journalism. That internship led to a 14-year stay that saw LeBlanc build a deep understanding of Museum operations. During this time, she was accepted into the Museum Management Institute, a competitive museum leadership training program of the J. Paul Getty Trust, administered by the American Federation of the Arts. This month-long intensive executive education program fueled her decision to become an executive director.

LeBlanc's next career step saw her move to the role of Assistant Director of Brooklyn Children's Museum, the first children's Museum. In this position she oversaw three program divisions: Education, Exhibitions and Collections and led the development of the museum's national traveling exhibit program. LeBlanc was recruited to assume the role of Executive Director of Lied Discovery Children's Museum in Las Vegas. While helming that museum she oversaw the development of the museum's YouthWorks & ArtSmarts programs, which have been cited as national model programs for underserved youth by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

LeBlanc joined Long Island Children's Museum in 2005. During her tenure, she has spearheaded programs and exhibitions and multi-year community initiatives that have broadened the Museum's audience, deepened its community connections, secured more than \$4.5 million dollars in federal funding while establishing a national reputation for Long Island Children's Museum. She has seen the Museum welcome 3.5 million people during her years of service; bringing LICM's total visitorship to more than 5 million guests.

Contributions to the Field

Throughout her career, LeBlanc has made it a priority to share her expertise at conferences and as a frequent contributor to professional journals. She has

delivered presentations on *Museums & Social Responsibility* (Smithsonian Conference), *The Challenges of Operating a New Museum* (Association of Children's Museums), *Increasing Your Organization's Cultural Competency* (Sagamore Museum Institute), among others. LeBlanc has addressed the US House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Healthy Families & Communities detailing "*How Museums & Libraries Strengthen Communities.*"

LeBlanc has literally written the history of Children's Museums, when she authored "The Slender Golden Thread, 100 Years Strong: The Children's Museum Movement Celebrates its Centenary" for *Museum News*. Her writing has tackled a number of issues regarding inequality and social justice including "Beyond Exhibitions and Programs: Against a History of Segregation, One Museum's Systemic Approach to Social Justice" (*Hand to Hand*, the journal of the Association of Children's Museums) which researched issues of diversity, economic inequality and the impact of segregation on Long Island.

She has held numerous leadership positions in the museum field, including as an officer of the Association of Children's Museums and the Nevada Museums Association. LeBlanc has served on the board of the Museum Association of New York (MANY), most recently as President.

LeBlanc has been honored as one of Nassau County's Women of Distinction and named one of the "*50 Most Influential Businesswomen of Long Island*" by Long Island Business News. This spring, her contributions to the field will be recognized as she receives the Board of Directors Special Achievement Award from the Museum Association of New York.

As she reflects on her career, LeBlanc is most proud to have led museums to positions of national recognition and for developing the steady hand needed to guide organizations through turbulent and transformative times. Additionally, LeBlanc points to her deep interest in social justice and community outreach and weaving these values and priorities into museums she has led.

LeBlanc intends to stay connected to the field she loves as a consultant to museums across the country, while making time for hobbies she has let slip and international travel, including regular visits to her daughter's family in Wales

Long Island Children's Museum is conducting a national search for her successor.

About the Long Island Children's Museum (www.licm.org)

The mission of Long Island Children's Museum is to connect all our communities' children, and those who care for them, to a life of wonder, imagination and exploration. At LICM, children discover their passions and their relationship to the world we share. The 40,000-square-foot museum welcomes nearly 275,000 children and annually. The private, not-for-profit institution chartered by the New York State Board of Regents, offers museum-based educational programs and cultural experiences, as well as an extensive community outreach program offered in schools, libraries and youth centers across Long Island. Additionally, the Children's Museum operates the historic Nunley's Carousel in association with Nassau County, one of three intact Stein & Goldstein carousels still in existence.

LICM is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), recognized as the field's gold standard for museum excellence and signifies a museum's quality, credibility and deep commitment to mission and community. Less than 3% of the nation's more than 30,000 museums have earned this recognition. LICM is currently the only children's museum in NY State, and just one of 16 nationwide, to achieve accreditation. The Museum is the recipient of the 2012 National Medal for Museum & Library Service, the highest honor conferred on museums for extraordinary civic, educational, economic, environmental, and social contributions.