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**Hermitage Founding Executive Director**

**Bruce E. Rodgers to Retire in December**

(Sarasota County) Debbi Benedict, president of the Hermitage Artist Retreat’s board of trustees, announced today the pending retirement of Hermitage founding executive director Bruce E. Rodgers as of December 31, 2019. Rodgers served on the original steering committee organized by the Sarasota County Arts Council and co-founders Patricia Caswell and Syd Adler to restore and adapt the five historic buildings into an artist community. After the organization received its not-for-profit status in 2002, Rodgers became a founding trustee. He stepped down from the board to become the acting director in 2004 and was appointed the first Hermitage executive director in 2005.

“Since our beginning, Bruce has been our guiding light and a remarkable visionary, taking the Hermitage further than we could imagine,” said Benedict. “Our entire board, past and present, wish him great happiness in his retirement and thank him for leading us on this incredible journey.”

As the founding director, Rodgers set the operating policies and procedures for the organization and grew its annual operating budget from $80,000 to its current $700,000-plus level. He oversaw the completion of the historic campus restoration that was begun by the Sarasota County Arts Council; established the first endowment program; and created many local, regional, and national partnerships. In 2008, in partnership with Bob Greenfield, then president of the Greenfield Foundation, Rodgers created the Greenfield Prize at the Hermitage Artist Retreat—a $30,000 prize in the form of a commission for a new work—which raised the organization’s profile to national status.

In addition to his many achievements as executive director, Rodgers has given back to the local community and to the field of artist communities. He served on the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County’s board of directors; Sarasota Film Commission Community Advisory Board; on panels for the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs; and nationally, for 10 years, on the board of the Alliance of Artists Communities.

 “In 2004, I was given both the honor and challenge of leading this new kind of cultural organization in our community—an organization that serves writers, painters, poets, composers, playwrights, and visual artists who are creating the art of our time,” says Rodgers “This challenge could only have been met with the steadfast partnership of our dedicated trustees, our staff, our National Curatorial Council, our volunteers, and our community. With the solid platform we have established, it’s a perfect time to pass the leadership to the next generation who will continue to use this platform to dream and to create future possibilities for the Hermitage. The blessing of this position has been the incredible talented and generous people I’ve had the privilege to work with and to know. They are my friends, and I will always keep them in my heart.”

A search committee, chaired by Englewood businessman David Dignam of Key Agency and comprised of both trustees and community members, has been formed to oversee the national search for the next leader to build on the foundation that has been created. An email address has been established for interested candidates to send their resume along with a cover letter for the executive director role to HermitageEDSearch@gmail.com.

**About the Hermitage Artist Retreat:**

The Hermitage is a nonprofit artist retreat located in Englewood, Sarasota County, Florida. It invites accomplished artists in all disciplines for residencies on its beachfront campus which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Its artists, who are asked to interact with the community, touch thousands of Gulf Coast residents and visitors with unique and inspiring programs. Hermitage fellows have included Pulitzer, Tony, Emmy, Grammy and MacArthur Fellowship award winners. The Hermitage awards the $30,000 Greenfield Prize for a new work of art, and the Aspen Music Festival awards the annual Hermitage Prize in Composition. For more information about The Hermitage Artist Retreat, visit www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.

**The Hermitage is supported by:**

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