Berkshire Museum Names New Executive Director
Experienced Museum Leader to Take the Helm
Jeff Rodgers Joins Staff April 1

[Pittsfield, MA] - On the same day the Berkshire Museum opened more than 100 years ago, the Museum will welcome Jeff Rodgers as its new Executive Director on April 1. Rodgers brings more than 20 years of museum experience to the Berkshire Museum’s top job. Rodgers currently serves as Provost and Chief Operating Officer of the South Florida Museum in Bradenton, Florida.

“The Berkshire Museum is, and must continue to be, an integral part of the Berkshire community. The Museum creates experiences that spark new thinking and new connections bridging art and history and the natural world,” said Rodgers. “Over the past few months I’ve met with leaders from across the community and came away buoyed by the spirit of cooperation in our conversations. I am eager to lead that work with a commitment to collaboration and transparency. I have a lot of listening ahead.”

Rodgers has served in a number of roles at the South Florida Museum. Since 2016, as Provost and Chief Operating Officer, he has held broad leadership responsibilities for strategic planning, creating innovative programming, fundraising, and outreach across the community to build and sustain crucial partnerships and collaborations. A former teacher, Rodgers also served in a
variety of roles at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, including as Director of the Moveable Museum Program.

Rodgers was the unanimous selection after a rigorous four-month search led by the Museum's Board of Trustees. The search was facilitated by a national firm, Brent D. Glass LLC, that specializes in museum management and attracted a strong pool of applicants. Berkshire Museum staff and Berkshire community members participated in the search process. Dr. David Ellis, who has served as Interim Executive Director, will work with Rodgers through a transition period.

“Jeff brings a track record of innovative leadership and creative thinking that will, true to our unchanging mission, take the Museum into a secure and successful future,” said Elizabeth McGraw, President of the Board of Trustees. “Jeff shares our commitment to finding new and meaningful ways to connect art, science and history for people of all ages across our community and this region. We are grateful to David Ellis for his leadership and wise counsel in this important time.”

Members of the community involved in the selection included Julianne Boyd, Artistic Director of the Barrington Stage Company; Jennibeth Gomez, marketing and social media specialist; Jason McCandless, Superintendent of Pittsfield Public Schools and former Superintendent of Lee Public Schools; Judy Rush, Director of Curriculum of Pittsfield Public Schools; Peter Taylor, President of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation; Jay White, Executive Director of Berkshire Arts and Technology (BART) Charter School; and Bill Wright, Artist and Blue Q employee.

“As a former teacher, as someone who deeply understands the important role of museums in educating people young and old, Jeff brings to the Berkshire
Museum valuable skills, experience and vision,” said McCandless, Pittsfield Schools Superintendent. “All our learners will benefit.”

Taylor said, “Nonprofits are a vital sector for our region and nonprofit leadership matters. Jeff is a highly skilled museum executive who is committed to increasing the Berkshire Museum's engagement with the community, expanding its important educational role and guiding it into the future.”

Boyd said, “The Berkshire Museum has been and must continue to be a vital part of our cultural community. Jeff understands how critical it is to connect art, science, and history in order to increase the meaning and understanding of all of these important disciplines.”

About Berkshire Museum

Berkshire Museum is located at 39 South Street (Route 7) in Pittsfield, MA. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child (under 18); free admission for Museum members, EBT cardholders, and children age 3 and under. For more information, visit www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

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Q: Why did you seek the position of Executive Director at the Berkshire Museum?

A: For me, museums are all about bringing people face to face with art, with remarkable objects, and with the ideas inherent in all. The Berkshire Museum has a remarkable collection of art, historical artifacts, and more that spans the natural world and the human experience. So, no matter your age or your
interests, you are sure to find something that intrigues you, sparks your curiosity, and inspires you to think differently about the world and your place in it.

I love the eclectic nature of the Berkshire Museum. I love the way the museum is an integral part of the fabric of the community. I love the creativity of the staff and the work they’ve been doing. We’re looking at a museum that’s facing some of the challenges that museums across the country are facing now and into the future. I want to help the museum meet those challenges. A new chapter is about to be written in the history of the Berkshire Museum and I want to help write it. I see only positive outcomes.

Q: What are those challenges facing the Berkshire Museum and other museums?

A: One of challenges museums face in general today is their relevancy. Taking a look at their traditional role as preservers and protectors and interpreters of objects for the public good. That role has been evolving. Museums are now engaged as always, with art and culture but also with social, educational, and economic issses in the community. Good local, regional, even national museums are hubs, culturally, socially, intellectually, educationally. How we balance all of those roles together to make sure we’re doing the greatest good for our community is a challenge.

Q: How would your friends describe you?

A: I walk the line between introvert and extrovert expertly. I love interacting with people especially when it comes to museum things and community things. But I also love my alone time get to think about new ideas new ways we could be doing things. For me, that balance works. I like camping and paddling kayaks and canoes. Every summer, I’m out to the Badlands to dig up Eocene and Oligocene fossils. And I’m an avid astronomer.
Q: **What are you proudest to have accomplished at the South Florida Museum?**

A: The South Florida museum is not unlike the Berkshire Museum. It’s not quite the same history but for the past 75 years the South Florida Museum has been home to a remarkable and eclectic collection, a state-of-the-art digital planetarium, and no one knew how to make sense of all the stuff we had and how it all held together in one museum. I’m proud of working with our very talented and creative staff to really unify the collection, to create ways for our visitors to connect objects to have a better sense of their place in it, how the world came to be the way it is, how cultures came to be the way they are and do that in a way that’s evergreen. We combatted the ‘been-there- done-that-ism’ to make sure that the museum experience is ever changing. We want people to grow with the museum so that as you come back you appreciate it in different ways. Imagine this museum captivating a pre-school student through school, and beyond, until they return as a great grandparent with their pre-school grandchild.

Q: **What are you looking forward to in moving to the Berkshires?**

A: I’m looking forward to reconnecting with skiing and hiking where there are actually hills and mountains. We don’t have that in Florida. I’m looking forward to the change of seasons, something I’ve come to miss dearly. And the food. I think I have a list of about 70 must-try restaurants in the region. I really enthused with the farm to table movement that’s there. The real connection restaurants have with agricultural community. As an astronomer, I love to connect with the night time sky. So I’m really looking forward to what I’ve seen are gorgeous dark skies and getting other people out there with me.

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