

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Board to Guide Magic Museum's Growth and Development

The American Museum of Magic (Marshall, Michigan) announces the creation of the museum's first professional board of trustees to steer it through an eagerly anticipated period of growth and expansion. Noted as possessing a "board of incredible talent," the museum has gathered together twelve individuals with more than 100 years of collective experience in the fields of museums, archives, libraries, and fundraising who share an enthusiasm for magic and American culture. Board Chair, Dr. Bradley L. Taylor, Associate Director of the University of Michigan's Museum Studies Program, notes, "Our work would have been impossible without that accomplished by earlier boards who kept the museum operating following the deaths of founders, Bob and Elaine Lund. The importance of their heroic work cannot be overstated. It is now imperative to surround ourselves with individuals best able to bring us the professional expertise needed to help assure the museum's long-term viability and the full realization of its incredible potential. The new board, together with the recent appointment of Jeff Taylor as our first professional Director last year, puts the museum in a very, very good place. The response we've had from the museum community has been overwhelmingly positive and we're equally excited that a third of our board members can also claim considerable knowledge of magic and magicians."

In addition to Board Chair Taylor, recent board appointments bring to the Magic Museum leading professionals from a variety of fields, including

- Abbie Albright, Educator and Community Leader (Marshall)
- Dr. Cathleen Baker, Senior Conservator, Preservation & Conservation, University of Michigan Library (Ann Arbor)
- Robert Behrens, Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs, University of Michigan-Dearborn (Dearborn)
- Nancy Villa Bryk, Director of Education & Public Programs, Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum, Museum Consultant, and Board Chair, Michigan Museums Association (Ann Arbor)
- Timothy Chester, Director Emeritus, Grand Rapids Public Museum, Museum Consultant, and Board Chair, Michigan Humanities Council (Grand Rapids)
- Susan Collins, two-time Past President, Historical Society of Michigan, and Historic Preservationist (Marshall)
- John Huebler, Director of Development-Major Gifts, University of Illinois at Chicago (Chicago)
- Jim Klodzen, Curator, American Museum of Magic (Portage, IN)
- Dennis Laub, Historian, American Museum of Magic (Fort Wayne, IN)
- Deborah Deacon Odette, Esq., Grant Writer, Arab American National Museum, Dearborn (Birmingham, MI)
- Mark Sandell, award-winning Graphic Designer and Copywriter (Ann Arbor)

The new board has already been busy completing important work long needed by the museum: the creation of policy in critical areas, participation in several publishing projects and major loans to special exhibitions at the Houston Museum of Natural Science and the Jewish Museum (New York), the recruitment of university interns to create electronic documentation for the museum's collections, successful completion of the museum's first external audit, expanded opening hours that have

led to a doubling of annual attendance figures, critical infrastructure improvements, and submission of an ambitious federal grant application to the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

Beyond this, the museum's board engaged in a lengthy visioning process in 2009 that recruited experts from the magic and museum communities to assess the museum's current collections and governance, and begin the process of planning for the future. These activities led to a new mission statement, a new vision statement, and, ultimately, the museum's first strategic plan. Board Chair Taylor says that the Board of Trustees has even more ambitious plans for 2010. "In addition to continuing all the existing work underway, we're committed to revisiting the nature of the visitor experience this year. We're beginning our season with a new exhibit of materials from magicians Penn and Teller, and a long-term commitment to making a visit to the museum a special event for our audience. With talented members from so many critical professions now represented on our board and with our new director in place, the sky's really the limit."

Long-term plans for the American Museum of Magic will guide its development into a prominent institution that preserves the memories and traditions of both small town and world-renowned performers, highlighting their contributions to popular culture. An impressive collection of artifacts, illusions, documents, books and memorabilia interprets four centuries of magic and magicians from throughout the world. It is the largest museum of its kind open to the public in the United States, and has been referred to as the "Smithsonian of American Magic." The museum is housed in two buildings in the National Historic Landmark District of Marshall, Michigan, a small town midway between Detroit and Chicago. The museum is open Monday thru Saturday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM (Adults \$5; Seniors/Children \$3.50), or by request (269-781-7570).

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