

Chairman of the arts

North Shore Academy of the Arts inducts Neil Willenson as chairperson of board of directors

By Jim Cryns
News Graphic Correspondent

North Shore Academy of the Arts Inc., a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization located in Ozaukee County, providing quality opportunities in the arts, enters its second decade of service to the community.

"We have many inspiring developments taking place and on the horizon," said NSAA founder, Sheri Bestor. "One of the most exciting is Neil Willenson joining our board. With his tremendous non-profit knowledge, people skills and overall leadership qualities, Neil will be a fantastic addition to our already strong board."

Current board members include former Chair Dave Fischer, the chief financial officer of Kapco, who is now the vice president of NSAA's board and is joining the financial committee; Darrell Hofland, village administrator of Grafton; Mike Donahue, certified public accountant and owner of Donahue's Accounting Services; Paula Hare, owner of Hare Strigenz Design; Bruce McInay, attorney; and Urszula Cholewinska.

"We are pleased and proud to welcome Dave Cavil to the board as well. Dave and his wife, Sara, were the people who stepped forward with a contribution to close the gap and make the outdoor classroom a reality. Dave is already involved with exciting improvements to the (new) Broad Street facility. The addition of Dave is perfect timing with Neil taking on the chairperson position."

Stepping in as chair, Willenson will work with board members on fundraising and governing the organization.

"When Neil became available, Sheri and I saw it as a golden opportunity," said NSAA's advisory board member, Les Weil. "Neil is uniquely qualified to lead the board with his first-hand knowledge and understanding of what it takes to run a successful 501(c)(3) organization, his training and background in arts and entertainment, as well as his participation in past NSAA productions. We are extremely fortunate to be able to add such a talented individual to what is already a strong board."

With 20 years of non-profit executive leadership skills as the founder and former chief executive officer of One Heartland, a national charity for disadvantaged children, members of the board feel that Willenson is the perfect fit to lead the board of directors. Most recently, Willenson began work as the vice president of community relations at Kapco, where he leads that company's vast philanthropic and community work.

"The dedication and experience provided by Dave Fischer throughout his tenure as board chair has brought

North Shore Academy of the Arts to a new level. I am confident that Neil, who has been involved with NSAA for many years, will continue the growth and leadership that Dave has provided. The combination of Neil's and Dave's experience and dedication will provide NSAA with a tremendous leadership team," said Weil, a community volunteer.

"NSAA continues to transition in such a positive way. With the addition of Neil and Dave Cavil and the continued dedication of our other board members, our administration at NSAA will be able to focus on running the organization and programming," said Bestor.

Willenson summed up his appointment: "It is a great honor to be invited to serve as the board chair of the North Shore Academy of the Arts. For many years I have been an admirer of founder Sheri Bestor and the creative and dedicated team she has assembled. As a resident of Grafton myself, and a participant in NSAA programming, I know first-hand the great value that NSAA provides to thousands of people in our community. I am excited for the opportunity to help NSAA bring their bold and ambitious vision of growth to fruition. Art and arts education truly enrich lives. NSAA is a pre-eminent organization in making this possible," said Willenson.

North Shore Academy of the Arts is located in Grafton, with two facilities. The organization focuses on classes in the arts for children and adults, musical productions, workshops, mentoring in the arts and the soon-to-be-opening art studios, boutique and art gallery on Broad Street.

To learn more about NSAA or to become involved, visit the Web site at www.northshoreacademyofthearts.org.



Photo submitted

Grafton resident Neil Willenson will take on the responsibilities as North Shore Academy of the Art's chairman of the board of directors.

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