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Contact: Adrian Moore
Development & Communications Manager
(401) 273-2250 x204
adrian@rihumanities.org

RHODE ISLAND COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Rhode Island Council for the Humanities welcomes **Sharon Collier, Touba Ghadessi, Gina McDonald, Jean Patiky, and John Simmonds** to its Board of Directors. The new members bring expertise in the areas of scholarship, technology, finance, leadership development, arts, and community engagement.

In addition to the new board members, the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities elected its new board leadership. Former Vice Chair Joan Abrams has been named the new Chair. Polly Hutcheson will move into the Vice Chair position, and Shawn Christian will move into the Secretary position. New board member Gina McDonald will become the Treasurer.

"Our board members play a vital role, supporting the Council's efforts to strengthen Rhode Island humanities and promote cultural, historic, and civic engagement across the state," said Elizabeth Francis, Executive Director. "We are pleased to welcome these committed Rhode Island community leaders to the Council's board of directors."

The Rhode Island Council for the Humanities seeds, supports, and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement by and for all Rhode Islanders. As an independent, nonprofit state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Council has provided over \$7.4 million in grants to support more than 550 organizations throughout the state of Rhode Island, as well as independent researchers, filmmakers, scholars, and oral historians, since its founding in 1973.

Biographies of new board members and leaders are included below. Photos are attached for all new board members. For more information, contact Adrian Moore at adrian@rihumanities.org or (401) 273-2250 x204.

New Board Members:

Sharon Collier is an accomplished human resources professional with over 20 years of experience working within financial service, non-profit, and small business settings. As Founder and Entrepreneur of ThoughtSynergy, Sharon collaborates with small business owners to align owner(s), leader(s) and staff with business strategies and goals. Driven by measurable results, ThoughtSynergy is a HR & Business Development company that focuses on people, purpose and progress. Sharon holds a BS in Human Development from Rhode Island College. Her prior board affiliations and community service include Festival Ballet Providence and Neighborhood Health Plan of RI. She is a 2009 graduate of Leadership Rhode Island and the 2010 Program Co-Chair.

Touba Ghadessi, PhD, is Associate Professor of Art History at Wheaton College and currently the Chair of the program. She is also the co-founder of the Wheaton Institute for the Interdisciplinary Humanities (WIH) and holds a joint position as the president of the oldest

Renaissance society in America, the New England Renaissance Conference. Touba has been awarded grants to study at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), to conduct archival research in Paris, Florence, and Rome, and to participate in the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique's sponsored seminars in Paris. Touba received her BA from Trinity University and her MA and PhD from Northwestern University.

Gina McDonald, CPA, Treasurer, is a graduate of Rhode Island College with a BA in both Accounting and Spanish. In Gina's 17-year public accounting career, she specialized in accounting and consulting for not-for-profit and health care organizations in Rhode Island. She is now the Director of Finance at the YMCA of Greater Providence. Gina also serves as the Board Treasurer of the Rhode Island College Foundation.

Jean Patiky is an artist, community leader, educator, and businesswoman. She is an Exhibiting Artist Member of the Providence Art Club, an Artist Member of the Rhode Island Watercolor Society, and a member of the Providence Rotary Club where she co-chaired their annual Paint Off fundraiser. Before moving to Providence in 2007, Jean lived in Miami, FL, where she served as a facilitator and a board member for Miami's Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Miami Program for nearly a decade. As Program Director for Miami's oldest synagogue, she created "Mending Miami," which helped to rebuild 17 sites damaged in Hurricane Andrew. In 2000, she launched her business, "Patiky Hand-Signed Art Cards," which are currently sold in museums shops and hotels and as corporate gifts. She was employed by Burdines, a Federated Department Store, as their Corporate Consultant and chaired "Women in Business" at the Banker's Club. In 1996, she co-produced "The Magic of Miami" a special section for FORBES Magazine. With a degree in art education from Pennsylvania State University, Jean taught in and administered the Continuing Education Arts Program at Miami-Dade College. Currently, Jean is leading an initiative to establish a humanities and arts-based senior residence in downtown Providence to realize a vision of a vibrant community connected to the "Creative Capital's" rich cultural resources.

John Simmonds has played several roles in his career including software engineer, project manager, systems analyst, and software development manager, working in the chemical manufacturing, pharmaceutical, insurance and financial industries. He joined Fidelity Investments in 2006. John earned his Bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester, his MBA from Pace University, and his Project Management Certification from George Washington University.

New Board Leadership:

Joan Abrams, Chair, is currently serving as the deputy to the President of the Community College of RI working on special projects. She recently retired from Simmons College, Boston MA, where she served as Professor of Practice and Director of the Masters in Communications Management. She is past President of the Board of Directors of Save the Bay, where she co-chaired their Capital Campaign, and currently serves as a Trustee and Co-Chair of the President's Leadership Council. She is a board member at Festival Ballet and Blithewold Mansion, and previously served as President at both institutions. She serves on the Dean's Advisory Council of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where she earned her Master's in Public Administration, and has been named to the Board of Governors of Higher Education for the three Rhode Island state colleges. She is a member of the Foundation Board of Women & Infants Hospital.

Polly Hutcheson, Vice-Chair, is Director of Sponsored Programs for Roger Williams University, focusing on partnerships and collaborations that connect faculty and students in research and

projects that serve the university and local and global communities. Prior to RWU, she worked for eight years with the U.S. Department of Education, overseeing secondary and postsecondary partnerships, reviewing and evaluating grant projects, and promoting the integration of academic and experiential education. Previously, she spent 14 years with a higher education advocacy organization, ultimately serving as Vice President of Education and Government Relations. Polly holds a BA in Political Science from Wellesley College and an MA with advanced graduate studies from Fordham University focused on urban policy analysis and revitalization. She also serves on the board of the Jamestown Historical Society.

Shawn Anthony Christian, PhD, Secretary, is Associate Provost and Associate Professor of English, African American, and American Studies at Wheaton College in Norton, MA. His research focuses on the Harlem Renaissance and early twentieth-century print culture. Originally from Miami, Florida, Shawn moved to RI in 2003 and quickly planted roots in Providence through his work with the United Way and Trinity Rep. An actor (and occasional director), Shawn has performed in a production of James Baldwin's *The Amen Corner* and co-directed a production of Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls*. Shawn lives in Providence.

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