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Starlight Welcomes Bess Wallerstein Huff as Vice President of Marketing and Sales



Wallerstein Huff will replace Cindy Jeffries, who last fall announced her plans to retire at the end of 2021.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – With the New Year comes new executive leadership at Starlight! This week, Bess Wallerstein Huff joins the team at the historic theatre in Swope Park as Starlight’s new Vice President of Marketing and Sales. Cindy Jeffries held the position for 18 years. Starlight’s hiring committee, including its board of directors, conducted a nationwide search to fill the role and offered the position to Wallerstein Huff late last year.

“Starlight Theatre is an iconic, historical venue that has been a cornerstone of performing arts in Kansas City,” Wallerstein Huff said. “I’m thrilled to be a part of an institution that has such deep roots in the community and is looking towards building new live arts experiences.”

Prior to accepting the role at Starlight Theatre, Wallerstein Huff served as the Director of Marketing and Community Outreach at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. She joined the team at the Kauffman Center in 2010, and was an integral part of the building’s grand opening serving many roles in marketing and programming in her eleven-year tenure, including overseeing communications, media and community relations, institutional and programmatic marketing, organizational branding, and education outreach programs. She has nearly 20 years of experience in the nonprofit performing arts industry and has also worked as the Director of Operations and Community Relations for the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival and Production Manager for Theater League, Inc.

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“Bess is already such a respected member of the Kansas City arts community, and we’re so excited for the knowledge and energy that she will bring to Starlight,” Rich Baker, Starlight’s President and CEO, said. “Her enthusiasm for the tasks at hand, her excitement to collaborate and her proven track record make her the perfect addition to the executive team.”

As an entrepreneur and advocate for cultural growth, Wallerstein Huff was the owner and chief member of CounterClockwise Comedy, served as the Executive Producer of the Kansas City Improv Festival and helped launch the Prairie Village Jazz Festival. Most recently, Wallerstein Huff was the founder and co-owner of Show Delivered, a company that connected performers to audiences at home, in driveways, yards and cul-de-sacs to keeping local performers employed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Wallerstein Huff has worked as a director, producer, writer, and actor for several performing arts institutions including Theater in Shawnee Mission Park, The Fishtank Theatre and KC Fringe Festival. She currently serves on the Public Art Commission in Johnson County, KS, as treasurer of the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association, and as a member of the Charlotte Street Foundation’s Programming Committee. Wallerstein-Huff is a graduate of the 2019 Centurions Leadership Class where she serves as the Co-Chair of the Community Leadership Committee and led the planning of the 2019 Women’s Forum which facilitated conversations about women and mentorship. Bess was appointed to the Marketing Committee of the Central Exchange’s Leadership Lyceum in 2017 after being awarded the Adele Hall Endowment for Advancement and Development Scholarship (AHEAD) through the CX. She continues to volunteer as a judge of theater performance and break-out workshop leader for the Arts Council of Johnson County’s Shooting Stars Scholarship program. Most recently, Bess was named a 2020 Rising Star through Kansas City’s The Independent Magazine. She holds a degree in performance from the University of Central Missouri and is a 2021 graduate of Rockhurst University’s Executive MBA program.

For more Starlight content, follow Starlight on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok @kcstarlight.

About Starlight

Opened as a theatre in 1950 and a nonprofit organization in 1951, Starlight is the largest and oldest performing arts institution in Kansas City and provides inspiring, one-of-a-kind experiences to its patrons. Starlight presents and produces Broadway musicals, concerts and Indoors shows in addition to offering extensive community engagement programming, including classes, scholarships and Starlight’s Blue Star Awards, one of the largest high school musical theatre award programs in the nation.

Located on 16 acres in Swope Park, Starlight’s historic, city-owned venue is the second-largest outdoor producing theatre in the country and includes rehearsal halls, a museum, club area for dining, concessions, gardens, fountains and a 10-story, climate-controlled stage. For more information, visit kcstarlight.com.

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