



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# THE MAX WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

MERIDIAN, Miss. (October 1, 2020) – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience has added six new members to its Board of Directors, strengthening leadership with a diverse cast of accomplished individuals who deeply appreciate the state’s arts legacies.

New directors for the two-year-old state institution include a Southern studies professor with extensive publishing credentials, a veteran Mississippi nonprofit alliance leader, the city of Meridian’s chief administrative officer, and individuals with extensive business and volunteerism experience. The new members will also enhance the board’s diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, age, religious beliefs, professional skills, and geographic reach.

“As our interactive museum advances its mission of highlighting giants from various art fields, ranging from ‘Father of Country Music’ Jimmie Rodgers to poet Margaret Walker and ceramic artist George Ohr, we are adding board members who can play key roles in advancing a vital mission,” said Fred Wile, chairman of the Committee on Directors. “They will help us serve the entire state and inspire a new generation of writers, musicians, painters, actors, and other artists.”

Board Chair Ann Alexander said “we are delighted” to add board members who can help raise the institution’s profile and refine its offerings.

During a September meeting, the current board appointed the following as new members:

- Author and journalist Ralph Eubanks is a visiting professor of Southern studies and English associated with the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Eubanks, a native of Mount Olive, is the author of *The House at the End of the Road: The Story of Three Generations of an Interracial Family in the American South* and *Ever Is a Long Time: A Journey into Mississippi’s Dark Past*, which *Washington Post* book critic Jonathan Yardley named as one of the best nonfiction books of the year. He has contributed articles to the *Washington Post* Outlook and Style sections, the *Wall Street Journal*, *WIRED*, the *New Yorker*, and National Public Radio. He served as director of publishing at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., from 1995 to 2013.

- Eddie Kelly is the chief administrative officer for the city of Meridian. A Gulfport native, Kelly served as an area division manager for Mississippi Power before retiring in 2018. He is a Marine Corps veteran.
- Annie McMillan, from Hattiesburg, is area manager for Mississippi Power's Northern Division. She has an extensive background in governmental affairs and business and job development programs. McMillan was instrumental in reorganizing grant funding and nonprofit activities in Kemper County and has been affiliated with several organizations in Meridian and Lauderdale County, including the Minority Business Alliance, Hope Village for Children, and the Community Foundation of East Mississippi.
- Sammy Moon, from Jackson, serves as executive director of the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy. A native of Amory, Moon supports nonprofit and philanthropic organizations in their efforts to strengthen Mississippi's families and communities. Moon previously served as director of the Mississippi Association of Grantmakers and as senior advisor to United Way Worldwide's Field Engagement Division and worked as a senior associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland.
- Caroline Cannada Rush of Meridian is a dedicated volunteer for The MAX and serves as chair for the popular The MAX/Sipp & Savor food and beverage festival. Married to Dr. Lane Rush, she has three children and serves on the advisory board for the Mississippi Children's Museum-Meridian, currently under construction, and the Strategic Planning Committee for Lamar School. She is originally from Jackson.
- Kelly Swain of Meridian has more than 45 years of experience as a certified public accountant, working primarily in taxation, auditing, business consulting, estate planning, and employee benefit plans. He began his accounting career with the international firm of Coopers & Lybrand and has long been a shareholder of local firms in Meridian.

At the January 2021 meeting, the new members will join current board members Ann Alexander, Fred Wile, Tommy Dulaney, Sheryl Davidson, Veldore Young-Graham, Dede Mogollon, Melanie Mitchell, Joe Norwood, and Duffee Williams, all of Meridian; Marian Barksdale, Oxford; Billy Thornton, Gulfport; Shawn Brevard, Tupelo; Archie Anderson and Checky Herrington, Starkville; and Millie Swan, Hattiesburg.

### **About The MAX**

The MAX showcases Mississippi's arts and entertainment achievements in one immersive attraction. Visitors of all ages explore the global impact of Mississippians on music, literature, theater, art, entertainment, and cuisine. Located in downtown Meridian, the state museum inspires the next generation of artists through state-of-the-art exhibits and engaging programs.

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Editors: Photos, images and informational materials will be made available. To request additional information or resources, contact [tullos@msarts.org](mailto:tullos@msarts.org)