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Craig W. John headshot courtesy of Tyler Molinari, POSCHE MODELS INTL

ArtServe’s New Executive Director Sees Artists as Trailblazers in Social Change

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (April 2, 2019) – ArtServe, Inc., South Florida’s award-winning arts services organization, is proud to announce the appointment of Craig W. Johnson as its new executive director.

In his new role, Johnson will focus on expanding ArtServe’s mission of supporting emerging and established artists by enhancing services to marginalized populations, including artists with disabilities and amplifying diversity and inclusion. He will begin by implementing strategies that conceptualize and heighten the perceived value of the arts by highlighting artists connected to social welfare initiatives in order to foster community building across disciplines and demographics. With the goal of empowering artists to be agents of change, Johnson is a staunch proponent of providing equitable access to the arts, which enables communities to reach their highest potential across social, cultural and economic arenas.

"The intersection of art and social change is a potent source of creativity and connection," said Johnson, who is a seasoned veteran in artistic programming, creative direction and senior-level arts management. "Artists are simultaneously historians, awakeners and agents of change. I'm honored to be invited into the Broward County cultural community to support local talent working to deepen an understanding of our shared humanity."

Johnson brings to ArtServe extensive experience in vision crafting, entrepreneurial thought leadership, grant writing, fund development, strategic planning and event management. He joins ArtServe from Central Florida, where he served as president and CEO of the Center for Contemporary Dance, a nonprofit community dance organization he founded and spearheaded for 17 years. He earned national recognition for the organization with multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and awards for statewide contributions to arts education, social change and innovation in the arts. Additionally, Johnson was a consultant for numerous arts organizations throughout the state, working to improve companies in all phases of their evolution, from start-up to recovery to accelerated growth.
“After a comprehensive executive search that included more than 400 applicants, we are excited to have Craig as our new executive director. With him, we are confident that the mission and renewed vision for ArtServe will prosper in 2019 and for many years to come,” said Board President Jason Hughes. "We are already working toward developing a major event that will fully vivify Craig's vision for the organization and provide an opportunity for the community to hear about the strategic plan and artistic programming that will come to life at ArtServe over the next two years.”

Johnson’s vision for ArtServe includes the cultivation of artists across all disciplines with repercussions on a scale beyond that of art-making. "Led by an incredibly talented staff who uphold a commitment to collaboration and experimentation, ArtServe will function as a creative laboratory with a focus on deeper investments in public school education, arts advocacy and the presentation of exciting, relevant works of art," he said.

Prior to entering a career in arts management, Johnson was a top medical school student, withdrawing after two years to return to his passion for the arts. He graduated summa cum laude from Rollins College in Winter Park with a degree in biology.

"It was a big but necessary shift," said Johnson. "In order to leave my best mark on planet earth, I had to lean into the pursuit of self-actualization, authenticity and the choosing of joy. Everything we do prepares us for the next life step, even if we don't see it in the moment. Education in the sciences has been an invaluable asset that I now use as strategy for getting results in the arts through sound investigation, experimentation and analysis."

Johnson is excited about the future for the nearly 30-year-old nonprofit arts incubation, education and creative services provider. "This is an incredible time for Broward County artists, activists, cultural leaders and arts supporters to join us in a magnificent new movement, taking place right here at ArtServe," said Johnson. "My door is always open, and I welcome the community to contact me to share their perspectives and insights. It's the voice of the people that will shape our artistic programming. How we wield the transformative power of art will be a thrilling, shared experience."

Johnson can be reached by emailing CraigWJ@artserve.org or by calling 954-462-8190.

About ArtServe, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization born out of a missive established by the Broward Cultural Division in 1988, ArtServe, Inc. became one of six of the nation’s first arts incubators. Designed to provide emerging and seasoned artists the space, education and resources to create new work, build audiences and cultivate self-sustaining business models, ArtServe supports 2,300 artists each year. Also providing professional-development, marketing and technology support for Broward County cultural organizations, the organization is directly responsible for amplifying the County's cultural vibrancy and strengthening the local economy through the arts. With direct service to the community, ArtServe offers public performances, workshops, community
classes in the arts, gallery exhibits and customized, immersive arts experiences for corporations and communities alike. In 2019, the organization is redoubling its commitment to diversity and inclusion, and increasing its focus on the presentation of creative works by artists that promote global wellness, social change and advocacy for special populations. ArtServe is supported in part by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council, the State of Florida, the Department of State and the Division of Cultural Affairs. Entry to the organization's ongoing public exhibits is free, and all are welcome. To learn more about upcoming events, please visit www.artserve.org or call (954) 462-8190.

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