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CULTURAL COUNCIL ANNOUNCES THE PLANNED DEPARTURE OF CEO RENA BLADES

*Cultural Council Board of Directors Announces Rena Blades' Departure to Pursue Travel and Consulting;
Board Conducting National Search for Replacement*

Lake Worth, November 15 -- The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County, Nathan Slack, announced today that The Council's President & CEO Rena Blades will step down on January 15, 2018. A national search for a new Chief Executive Officer will be conducted. Details on the search will be forthcoming. The Council will continue to make progress on its new strategic plan, and anticipates no changes to programs. Upon Blades' departure, Council interim director Kathleen Alex will steer the organization that manages the County grants and oversees Cultural Tourism programs under the Tourist Development Council, manages programs for local artists, presents the Muse Awards, and provides other services in Palm Beach County.

Nathan Slack said, "Rena has made an enormous impact on this organization and our County since she was appointed President & CEO in May of 2004, and we are sorry to see her go. However, we are happy for her as she embarks on a sabbatical to travel with her husband, John, and to privately consult. She leaves this organization greatly strengthened and ready for the next chapter of its leadership. It has been a privilege to work alongside Rena. She is a dedicated, passionate, and visionary leader who has guided the Cultural Council through a time of tremendous growth. Her commitment to the people of this County and our cultural community has been unwavering, and I know the impact of her many accomplishments will remain for years to come. I am grateful to Rena for her leadership and her friendship."

Rena Blades said, "As the Council begins on its 40th anniversary year, the board and staff are beginning this new year with strength, passion, and a commitment to providing Palm Beach County with a world-class Cultural Council positioning Palm Beach County as a preeminent region for creativity and culture in the United States. I depart fully confident in their abilities to carry this vision forward and in the firm foundation we've created together. It has been the honor of my life to serve this community, to work side by side with the directors of our cultural organizations, and to work for this Board of Directors who energetically supports our work."

Some of the major milestones during Blades' tenure with the Council include: the creation and execution of three separate strategic plans, the establishment of *art&culture* magazine that is now in its 11th year of publication and has garnered more than 25 publication awards, increasing the county's funding of arts and culture by \$1 million+ annually, the initiation of the Muse Awards and the Spotlight Luncheon, the Council's move in 2012 to the Robert M. Montgomery, Jr. Building in Lake Worth, the production of the Culture and Cocktails series, increased programs for local visual artists and musicians, establishing the Cultural Coalition, new arts education programs for children and the formation of Cultural Educators Committee, and the initiation of a planned giving program. Council programs have received numerous awards and accolades over her tenure.

The Council has seen impressive growth under Blades' leadership. Assets grew from \$1.6 to \$5 million and annual revenues grew from \$4.1 million to \$9.2 million, with contributed revenues increasing 150%. Annual grants to cultural organizations and artists increased from \$3.1 million distributed through FOUR different programs to \$4.5 million distributed through TEN different programs, effectively expanding grant making by introducing privately funded programs to its already robust Palm Beach County-funded programs. The Council's team of professionals is much larger than when Blades started in 2004, when the equivalent of just five full-time staff members worked for the Council. Today the Council employs 18 full-time, 5 part-time, and up to three volunteer/intern staff members.

About the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County

The Cultural Council of Palm Beach County is the official support agency for arts and culture in The Palm Beaches, serving non-profit organizations, artists and communities. The Council promotes arts and cultural education, provides capacity-building training and advocates for arts funding and arts-friendly policies in Palm Beach County, Florida's Cultural Capital®. A majority of the Council's funding comes from private donations and membership programs. Every year the Council administers \$4.5 million in grants to arts organizations in Palm Beach County, funded by hotel tourism taxes. To support this arts funding, the Council promotes cultural tourism to The Palm Beaches through multi-platform marketing and public information programs.

The Cultural Council presents exhibitions featuring Palm Beach County artists and provides additional programming at its headquarters in the historic Robert M. Montgomery, Jr. Building, an iconic Streamline Moderne former movie theater in Downtown Lake Worth. Also at the Cultural Council headquarters are the Roe Green Uniquely Palm Beach Store featuring products by Palm Beach County artists and the Jean S. and Frederic A. Sharf Visitor Information Center, a VISIT FLORIDA-designated Florida Certified Tourism Information Center.

The Cultural Council galleries, visitor information center and store are open 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, including a complete calendar of cultural activities in The Palm Beaches, visit palmbeachculture.com.