



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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School of Arts and Culture at MHP Selects Jessica Paz-Cedillos as Executive Director

Local non-profit administrator is familiar with East San Jose

San José, Calif. — Jessica Paz-Cedillos was named the new executive director for the School of Arts and Culture at MHP by the School's board of directors today. She comes from SOMOS Mayfair in San Jose, where she has served as director of resource development since 2015.

"Jessica has outstanding experience in managing and building non-profit community organizations, and she has deep knowledge of the people, challenges, and opportunities in our community," said Roy Hirabayashi, president of the School's board of directors.

"She has demonstrated effective leadership and a strong commitment to community engagement in order to develop the resources needed to achieve the best possible outcomes for families in East San Jose. I'm confident Jessica will help lead the School to a bright future."

She succeeds Tamara Alvarado, who left the School in June 2018 to become executive director of the Leo M. Shortino Family Foundation in San Jose and had served as the School's executive director since its founding in 2011. Paz-Cedillos is scheduled to start in March.

Since graduating from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in history and Spanish, she has held various positions as a direct service provider and fundraiser to protect constitutional rights, end homelessness, and close the opportunity gap. She has dedicated her career to the public service sector and has worked for organizations like the Bill Wilson Center and ACLU.

"As the daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico and El Salvador, I know firsthand the impact that arts and culture can have to build pride, preserve our heritage, and fuel community and economic development," she said.

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“I look forward to working with a great team and our community partners to ensure the School remains a vital resource for our children and their families, especially for our low-income immigrant community, where people can celebrate their culture and build meaningful relationships with each other.”

At SOMOS Mayfair, Paz-Cedillos was responsible for overall fund raising and communications. She diversified its revenue sources, nearly doubled its annual revenue from \$1.5 million to \$2.8 million, and helped raise more than \$10 million over four years.

SOMOS Mayfair is a non-profit community-based agency in the Mayfair neighborhood of East San Jose that supports children, organizes families, connects neighbors, and addresses systemic inequalities to uplift the dreams, power, and leadership of the community (www.somosmayfair.org).

During the search process, Vanessa Shieh served as interim executive director for the School. She has been associate director for the past seven years and will continue in that role.

“I’m deeply grateful for Vanessa’s leadership during this critical transition,” said Hirabayashi. “Her familiarity with our programs and our vision, and her strengths in non-profit management, have helped keep us on a steady course over the past six months. Vanessa will remain on our leadership team and assist Jessica as she takes the reins to carry out our strategic plan.”

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About the School of Arts and Culture

Guided by an extensive community planning process designed to re-imagine the future of the Mexican Heritage Plaza in East San Jose, the School of Arts and Culture at MHP was created in partnership with the East San Jose community and the City of San José in 2011.

The School offers afterschool and summer sessions in visual and performing arts, and it provides a multicultural and intercultural venue for community programs that embrace all cultures, while exploring the artistic traditions, cultural history, and contemporary creative expression of Mexican arts. In addition, the School is the home of the Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute, which is a leadership program for people of color engaged in the arts and cultural community.

The School has developed a strong financial position and enjoys the committed support of many multi-year funders. It recently completed a long-term strategic plan to carry out its vision for enriching the arts and culture opportunities for the people of San Jose.

In addition, the School is a partner in the founding of the *Si Se Puede Collective*, along with SOMOS Mayfair, Grail Family Services, and Amigos de Guadalupe, that joins the four community-based agencies serving low-income Latino families in the Mayfair neighborhood of East San Jose. Through joint advocacy, coordinated service delivery and accessibility, and sharing of costs and business operations, the Collective is creating a model of organizational collaboration to promote greater community impact.

For more information go to <http://schoolofartsandculture.org>.