



NEWS RELEASE

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Kent W. Faerber Elected to Lead Emily Dickinson Museum Board

AMHERST, Mass.—The Emily Dickinson Museum: The Homestead and The Evergreens has announced that Kent W. Faerber, who has served on the museum’s board of governors since its founding in 2003, has been elected as its new chair. Faerber, the president of the Springfield, Mass.-based Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, takes over leadership of the museum’s board from Dickinson biographer Polly Longworth, who has served as chair since the museum’s formation.

Longworth is stepping down from her duties as chair to complete work on a long-planned biography of the poet, but will remain on the museum’s board. She has had a remarkably successful tenure as the chair of the museum, which was formed in July 2003 when the Dickinson Homestead, the home of poet Emily Dickinson, merged with The Evergreens, the home of Dickinson’s brother Austin and sister-in-law Susan. Highlights of Longworth’s leadership include the museum’s successful completion of its first capital campaign and the adoption of a master plan that serves as the long-range blueprint for the restoration and improvement of the museum site.

“All of us owe Polly Longworth a huge thanks for serving as the prime mover of the momentous events of the past several years,” stated Faerber. “The merger, the building of a highly accomplished, professional staff, the stabilization of the finances of the museum with regular fundraising, the restorations, the master plan and the first successful capital campaign all would not have been possible without her extraordinary breadth of skills and hard work. It will be impossible to fill her shoes, but she has formed a strong organization, and I am both grateful and excited to be given the opportunity to build on her work by taking the museum to the next level.”

“What Dickinson wrote of people is visible as well in their institutions,” said Longworth: “‘We never know how high we are/Till we are asked to rise . . .’ The small band of board and staff who began this task has proved to be a mighty force, and Kent is key among them. I’m confident from years of working with Kent, beginning as fellow trustees of The Evergreens, that he has the energy and commitment to carry the museum forward. We’ve chosen the right leader at the right time.”

Faerber’s appointment as board chair comes at a vital time for the young institution. The new master plan, which emerged from the board’s strategic vision for the museum, identifies urgent infrastructure concerns, as well as major restoration and site development goals that the museum will attempt to embark upon over the next decade. Fundraising will undoubtedly be a top priority of Faerber’s chairmanship as the execution of the full master plan, estimated at \$13 million in today’s dollars, must be phased in as funds permit. As he makes clear, the prospect challenges but does not daunt him.

“Emily Dickinson is considered not only America’s finest poet, but one of the greatest in the English language. We’re so lucky to have available the single site where she lived with her family and wrote her poetry. Preservation and restoration are within reach of possibility,” said Faerber. Noting the many strengths of the museum, he added, “To stand in the bedroom where she wrote, to experience the home and landscape where she breathed and created, is a rare gift to those familiar with the power of her literary legacy. As more and more people come to Amherst to experience that gift, we’re confident the Emily Dickinson Museum will become one of the most important literary sites in the world.”

Faerber has served on the Emily Dickinson Museum’s board of governors since 2003. Prior to that appointment, he was a trustee of the Martha Dickinson Bianchi Trust, which owned The Evergreens, and was instrumental in the transfer of the trust’s assets to Amherst College, resulting in the establishment of the Emily Dickinson Museum.

A 1963 graduate of Amherst College and Harvard Law School, Faerber has served since 1999 as the president of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, a Springfield, Mass.-based foundation with grant-making responsibilities for \$114 million in assets supporting the Connecticut River Valley. From 1977 through 1994, he served as Amherst College’s Alumni Secretary and then its chief development officer.

While serving as a consultant for Amherst College from 1995 through 1999, he prepared a report on the assets that would be available if The Evergreens and the Dickinson Homestead were merged, sparking his own interest in the possibility of a combined museum, and serving as a basis for the subsequent consideration of such a merger. He has also been active in a number of other professional, civic and charitable organizations, both locally and nationally.

In addition to Faerber’s appointment, the museum announced the election of two new members to the board of governors, Dr. William P. Gorth and Kenneth Rosenthal.

Gorth is co-founder and president of National Evaluation Systems, an Amherst, Mass.-based educational testing company. He is active in several civic and professional organizations, and serves on the boards of Cooley Dickinson Hospital, the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts and The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. Gorth and his wife, Janet, live in South Amherst.

Rosenthal is a 1960 graduate of Amherst College and Yale Law School. From 1966 through 1976, he participated in the founding of Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., serving as the college’s treasurer and secretary. Most recently, until his retirement to Amherst this year, he was president of The Seeing Eye, Inc. of Morristown, N.J., an organization that breeds, trains and provides guide dogs for the visually impaired.

The Emily Dickinson Museum is dedicated to educating diverse audiences about the poet’s life, family, creative work, times and enduring relevance. The museum also is committed to preserving and interpreting the Homestead and The Evergreens as historical resources for the benefit of scholars and the general public.

The Emily Dickinson Museum: The Homestead and The Evergreens is owned by the Trustees of Amherst College. The museum has its own board of governors, which is charged with responsibility for raising its operating and capital funds. In November, the museum is open Wednesday and Saturday, 1-5 p.m. The Emily Dickinson Museum is a member of Museums10, a partnership of 10 museums in the Pioneer Valley. For more information about the museum, please call 413/542-8161 or visit the museum’s website.

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