UW Oshkosh alumna named new Oshkosh Area Community Foundation leader

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A leading Oshkosh organization that has, among its array of community betterment projects, helped develop and execute the vision for a revitalized downtown and riverfront while supporting schools, nonprofits, charities and basic community needs has a University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumna as its new executive director.

On May 16, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation announced Diane Abraham as its new president and chief executive officer.

Abraham has a doctorate in Leadership Studies from Marian University and graduated from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics and a Master's degree in Business Administration.

The Community Foundation's full news release on Abraham's selection follows:

Oshkosh Area Community Foundation names new president

OSHKOSH, WI — The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation Board of Directors announced Thursday, May 16, 2013, that it has hired Diane Abraham as its new president and chief executive officer. Abraham will replace Eileen Connolly-Keesler, who resigned the post in November 2012 after a 13-year tenure.

Abraham is currently Vice President for Philanthropy for Dignity Health Arizona and Interim President and CEO of Barrow Neurological and St. Joseph's Foundations, with sites throughout the Phoenix metropolitan area. She oversees five charitable foundations with annual contributions of $15 million, an annual budget of $6 million and a staff of 29. She previously served as executive director of Theda Care Foundations and Volunteer Services in Appleton. Her past experiences include planned giving and estate planning positions at Marian University in Fond du Lac and Baker Tilly Virchow Krause in Appleton, respectively.

"I'm really happy to have the opportunity to lead an organization with such a strong reputation both locally and nationally, and with deep roots in the community," Abraham said during a phone call from her Phoenix home. "I look forward to the opportunity to use all of my past experiences and leverage my connections in the greater Oshkosh area to prepare the Foundation to meet the ever changing and challenging needs of the community."

Abraham is expected to begin work in Oshkosh on July 1. Meanwhile, interim President Bill Wyman said

the Foundation has never been in a better position for growth, with numerous significant contributions coming in over the past six months and the fruition of several major community projects reaching completion recently.

The Board of Directors conducted an extensive search utilizing the services of Spano Pratt Executive Search.

“We are very happy to have Diane on our team. Her foundation experience and her financial acumen is a perfect fit to lead efforts as we continue to grow,” said Beth Wyman, Board Chair. “We will leverage Diane’s experience to help shape the future direction of the Foundation.”

The Foundation, which celebrated its 85th anniversary on Feb. 14, has more than 650 charitable funds and $88 million in assets. During the 2012 fiscal year, the Foundation granted more than $4 million to nonprofit organizations and in scholarships. A catalyst for change, the Foundation has lead or played roles in numerous major community projects, most recently the purchase and renovation of the former City Center Hotel, the Taking Root tree planting campaign, renovation of Grand Opera House, downtown redevelopment and construction of the Leach Amphitheater and Pollock Community Water Park.

“We’re thrilled to have someone of the caliber of Diane to lead the Community Foundation. Because of our very thorough and careful search, we had a pool of truly top notch candidates to examine,” said Marcy Coglianese, chair of the Search Committee. “We believe Diane will lead the Foundation in growth and in creative and innovative ways in the future.”

Abraham has a doctorate in Leadership Studies from Marian University and graduated from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics and a Master’s degree in Business Administration. She will relocate to the Oshkosh area, where several family members and close friends reside, in the coming months.

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization created by and for the people of Winnebago County, Waushara County, Green Lake County and Ripon. Through charitable giving, the Community Foundation strives to make our communities thrive. For more information, please call 920-426-3993.

Learn more:

- Oshkosh Area Community Foundation
- UW Oshkosh College of Business
- UW Oshkosh Graduate Studies