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The Business Edition

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- Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing Our Differences

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TODAY'S NEWS

[Exec Moves] **Wertheimer to Embrace Leadership Role**

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Embracing Our Differences will embrace new leadership in coming months. The organization on Friday formally announced Sarah Wertheimer will take over as executive director in June, at which point long-time leader Michael J. Shelton will retire after 14 years in charge.

Wertheimer for the past four years served as associate executive director and says transitioning into the top role at Embracing Our Differences was always planned. "I hope to continue a lot of the amazing programming we are doing and to continue to expand it and strengthen our relationships with the school district and all our community partners," she says.

Embracing Our Differences, through exhibitions and education initiatives, promotes diversity through art. In an open letter announcing the leadership change, Shelton called Wertheimer the “driving force behind our initiatives” and credited her with developing long-term sustainability goals for Embracing Our Differences. Shelton, with the organization since the beginning, noted that since the first Embracing Our Differences exhibit, submissions have grown from 126 in 2005 to 10,761 in 2017. “I’m deeply honored to have been a part of such an exciting project,” he wrote.

Wertheimer says that as the organization moves forward, work with the Sarasota and Manatee county school districts will be a top priority. “Honestly, when it comes to impacting the lives of children, the education program is the most important part of what we do,” she says.

The Sarasota native graduated from Sarasota High in 2005 and says volunteering played a big role in her life from a young age, when she would volunteer alongside her mother and grandmother in the community. “I’ve always understood the importance of giving back,” she says. Before working at Embracing Our Differences, Wertheimer served as development director for The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee and as development coordinator for Children First.

She says continuity will be the goal of the leadership transition in coming months, and did not expect a major change in direction from Shelton’s leadership. She credited Shelton as a mentor. “The greatest lesson I’ve learned from Michael has probably been his strategic planning skills,” she says, “to think big and think of the big picture.” 

Pictures: Michael J. Shelton (right) and Sarah Wertheimer (left).

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