



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts announces retirement of Executive Director, Diane LaBelle

BETHLEHEM, PA---On Monday, September 16, 2019, Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts (Charter Arts) School Board President, Mario Acerra, announced to faculty and staff that Diane LaBelle, Executive Director & CEO, will be retiring at the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year.

Acerra applauded her indelible contribution to the school. "Ten years ago, I stood in front of you in the old building and announced that we [the Board of Directors] found someone who would take the school to the next level, and Diane has done that in more ways than we could have imagined," he said.

During LaBelle's tenure, the school earned regional and national acclaim for its education model and student success. In 2018, Charter Arts was one of only 349 schools in the nation to be named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, the school has repeatedly achieved impressive rankings on U.S. News & World Report's Best High Schools in America List and was recently ranked #1 Best Charter High School in Pennsylvania by Niche. The school's rigorous curriculum has led to students earning some of the highest combined proficiency scores of all public and charter high schools in the Lehigh Valley on state assessments (Keystone Exams). Charter Arts has also been honored for closing the achievement gap between student groups with a three-year accolade as a Title I Distinguished School for High Achievement.

LaBelle also led fundraising efforts to develop the school's current 90,000 sq. ft. facility located in South Bethlehem's arts district. The facility was completed in August 2015 and allowed the school to expand its programs and enrollment. Charter Arts currently offers seven artistic majors (dance, literary arts, instrumental music, theatre, production arts, visual arts and vocal music) and enrolls 640 high school students, grades 9-12, who hail from 46 school districts across a ten-county region in eastern Pennsylvania.

"Working with the faculty and staff has been a high point of my time at Charter Arts," said LaBelle. "When I attended the first conference on charter schools in 1996, I knew that charter schools could be a path for students to be successful, especially for students who think and learn differently. I believe Charter Arts fulfills the need to serve students who are passionate about the arts."

Mission Statement

The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts provides a unique environment that fosters a creative, rigorous academic approach to learning and a development of talents in the arts. Built on passion, discipline and a commitment to excellence, this integrative educational experience inspires all students to believe in who they are and in what they can accomplish.



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Reflecting on her time with students, LaBelle said: “Every day, I feel fortunate to experience the excitement of learning that I witness with our students.”

LaBelle began her illustrious and accomplished career as an architect having earned a Master of Architecture degree from Carnegie Mellon University. Her interest in community revitalization then led her to create and become CEO of the non-profit organization, FreeHand, from 1996 to 1998, and then Director of ArtsQuest’s Banana Factory from 1998-2003. From 2003-2010, she led the fundraising, design, construction, and administration of the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts in Reading, Pennsylvania. The GoggleWorks is a 145,000 sq. ft. former safety goggle factory converted to a multifaceted art center that has become a national model for community revitalization.

Acerra noted that the Board of Directors has a succession plan in place that will be announced at the October School Board meeting.

ABOUT THE LEHIGH VALLEY CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS (Charter Arts): Charter Arts, opened in 2003, is an audition-based public charter school that provides a comprehensive curriculum for high school students, grades 9-12, who have a passion for the arts. Students major in one of seven artistic areas: dance, instrumental music, literary arts, production arts, theatre, visual arts, or vocal music.

Charter Arts' rigorous curriculum fosters both academic and artistic excellence for its students. The school's impressive Future Ready PA Index ranking, Advanced Placement (AP) exam statistics, Keystone Exam statistics, SAT scores, prestigious artistic accolades, and graduation rate, are testaments to the outstanding education that Charter Arts provides.

Charter Arts is proud to celebrate its sixteenth year as one of the most respected high schools for the arts in the nation. Charter Arts was one of only 349 schools in the nation to be named a 2018 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education and earned a Silver Award for its impressive ranking on U.S. News & World Report’s Best High Schools in America list.

Charter Arts is located at 321 East 3rd Street, Bethlehem PA 18015. For more information, visit www.CharterArts.org.