

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cedarhurst Announces Paula Lincoln as the New Director of Visual Arts

MOUNT VERNON, IL June 12, 2026 — Cedarhurst Center for the Arts is pleased to announce the appointment of Paula Lincoln as the museum's new Visual Arts Director. She succeeds Rusty Freeman, who is retiring after 17 years of dedicated service and leadership that has helped shape Cedarhurst's visual arts programming and creative community.

Lincoln, who will come on board in July, is coming to Cedarhurst from the Sheldon Concert Hall and Galleries in St. Louis, where she has served as Gallery Director for the past eight years. "Paula is well respected as a museum professional by a wealth of regional and national artists," said Hillary Esser, Executive Director of Cedarhurst. "Her exhibition curatorial and program development experience, in addition to her working knowledge of our collection will allow for a seamless transition and allow us to build upon Rusty's work".



Lincoln, a native midwesterner, grew up spending summers in southeast Missouri and has an appreciation for the rural landscape. She received a BFA in Fiber Arts from the University of Kentucky, and MFA in Sculpture from Syracuse University, in New York.

"I'm thrilled for this opportunity to join the Cedarhurst staff, and to build upon the institution's legacy," said Paula Lincoln. "This is an exciting time for Cedarhurst, and I'm eager to help advance the mission of the museum, and to collaborate closely with my new colleagues and the arts organizations in the region".

As an arts professional, Lincoln also has experience as a framing and restoration professional, working many years at the well-respected Elliot Smith Contemporary Art Gallery in St. Louis, giving her a working knowledge of conservation assessment and collections care.

An Open House Celebration for retiring Visual Arts Director, Rusty Freeman is being planned for Thursday, June 25 from 4 to 7pm in the Mitchell House at Cedarhurst with remarks scheduled for 5:30pm.

"Rusty leaves big shoes to fill," Esser said, "but we are grateful that he will be staying in our community and part of the Cedarhurst family."

Cedarhurst, located in Mt. Vernon, offers the region many art engagement opportunities, programs and events, as well as art classes for all ages. Five galleries in the Mitchell Museum and Shrode Art Center feature intriguing art exhibitions as well as prominent works of art from the museum's permanent collection. The outdoor gallery, the Goldman-Kuenz Sculpture Park, features over 70 large scale sculptures. Cedarhurst is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday throughout the year.

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