



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.**

*Images available upon request.*

**Newfields announces new executive structure**  
*New structure includes appointment of President of Newfields,  
Director of The Garden and Fairbanks Park, and Director of the IMA*

**INDIANAPOLIS**, Feb. 3, 2021—Newfields announces new executive structure featuring three new appointments as part of a long-term succession plan designed to ensure continued growth and positive momentum for Newfields. Newfields' Board of Trustees has established the new position of President of Newfields and enabled the President to appoint The Ruth Lilly Director of The Garden and Fairbanks Park; and The Melvin & Bren Simon Director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields.

"The Newfields' Board of Trustees has worked with Dr. Charles L. Venable since his arrival in 2012 to substantially broaden and diversify our attendance, increase earned and philanthropic income, and reduce debt and reliance on our endowment," said Katie Betley, Newfields' Board of Trustees Chairwoman. "This hard work has made Newfields more vibrant and sustainable, thus positioning the institution to better serve our community and the region. We have made these structural changes to help ensure this positive momentum continues into the future and beyond any one of our tenures."

**President of Newfields**, Dr. Charles L. Venable:

Dr. Charles L. Venable was hired as The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the Indianapolis Museum of Art in 2012. In 2015 the Board voted to name the entire 152-acre campus "Newfields" to broaden the institution's appeal beyond the 16% of people in Indianapolis who then accounted for more than 90% of all Museum visitation. In 2016, the Board extended Venable's contract until 2026. As part of its work on a 10-year Strategic Plan, the Board and Venable agreed that succession planning was a key issue, which led to these administrative changes. Venable will become the first-ever President of Newfields, effective immediately. In this new role he will focus on mid- and long-term strategic planning, high-level oversight, fundraising and Newfields' important diversity, equity, inclusivity and accessibility efforts. The Directors for the Museum and The Garden and Park will report directly to Venable, along with the Vice Presidents for Finance, Operations, Marketing and Advancement.

**The Ruth Lilly Director of The Garden and Fairbanks Park at Newfields**, Jonathan M. Wright:

Since joining the Newfields team in early 2016 as a Deputy Director, Jonathan Wright has brought extraordinary energy and vision to Newfields' expansive natural resources. Successful seasonal outdoor programs like *Spring Blooms* and *Winterlights* have become favorite events in Indianapolis and have advanced attendance and earned income dramatically. Wright has also succeeded as an excellent fundraiser and is now working with colleagues to develop key components in The Garden outlined in the institution's 30-year Master Plan, including: The Flower & Vegetable Garden, Children's Garden, Playhouse and Beer Garden, Sutphin Border Garden and the Glick-Barrett Fountain. He has also been instrumental in planning and executing Phase Two of The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park in terms of its new Wild Birds Unlimited Native Pollinator Meadow, expanded, permeable parking and natural lands management. In his new role as The Ruth Lilly Director of The Garden and Fairbanks Park, Wright will continue day-to-day oversight of Newfields' natural resources, horticultural fundraising and will work with finance and marketing to advance this large part of the Newfields portfolio.

**The Melvin & Bren Simon Director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields:**

In assuming the newly created position of President, Venable will lead the search and appointment of the new Melvin & Bren Simon Director of the IMA. Newfields is currently working with Mark Oppenheim, principal of m/Oppenheim, the well-known executive search firm based in San Francisco, to conduct a national search. As Director, Venable's successor will manage the day-to-day operations of one of the oldest and largest art museums in the country, including its exhibitions, public programs, art acquisitions and community outreach. Supporting the Director in these efforts will be the

IMA's curatorial, education, interpretation, public programs, conservation, conservation science and collections care departments. The goal is to fill this important position by late summer 2021.

###

### **About [Newfields](#)**

Newfields offers dynamic experiences with art and nature for guests of all ages. The 152-acre cultural campus features art galleries, lush gardens, a historic home, performance spaces, a nature preserve and sculpture park. From inspiring exhibitions in the IMA Galleries, to concerts in The Toby, to a stroll through The Garden with a glass of something cold, guests are invited to interact with art and nature in exciting new ways. Newfields is home to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, among the ten largest and ten oldest general art museums in the nation; the Lilly House, a National Historic Landmark; The Garden, featuring 40 acres of contemporary and historic gardens, the working Elder Greenhouse and Tanner Orchard; and The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, one of the largest art and nature parks in the country. Newfields' campus extends outside of Indianapolis with Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Ind.—one of the nation's most highly regarded examples of mid-century Modernist architecture. For more information, visit [DiscoverNewfields.org](#).

### **Media Contacts:**

Mattie Wethington

Director of Communications

317-923-1331 ext. 265

[mwethington@discovernewfields.org](mailto:mwethington@discovernewfields.org)

Emily Sogard

Communications & Content Editor

317-923-1331 ext. 111

[esogard@discovernewfields.org](mailto:esogard@discovernewfields.org)