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WAVE HILL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KATE FRENCH TO STEP DOWN AFTER 17 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

Board Committee to Seek New C.E.O.

Bronx, NY, June 11, 2007 – Wave Hill, a public garden and cultural center, announces that after 17 years, **Kate French will step down as Executive Director and President in spring 2008.** During Ms. French's tenure, Wave Hill has emerged as a vibrant and welcoming urban destination, with lively, contemporary programming in horticulture, education and the arts, set in a spectacular garden landscape.

Since joining Wave Hill in 1990, **French has overseen the expansion of Wave Hill's arts and cultural programs and the growth of education offerings for Bronx students. Visitor services also vastly expanded during this time**, including the establishment of café and catering food services, expansion of the gift shop and the development of tour and event business to generate earned income that supports public programming. **Capital improvements since 1990 have been the focus of systematic change that has dramatically opened public access** to Wave Hill facilities and increased compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. Most recently, French guided the development and construction of **the Perkins Visitor Center**, designed by Robert A.M. Stern Architects, and marked Wave Hill's 40th anniversary with the launch of a **strategic planning effort** led by the Board of Directors.

Wave Hill is also thriving financially. Wave Hill's **first endowment campaign** undertaken in the 1990s has become, under Ms. French's leadership, a cornerstone of support for the institution. After Ms. French arrived late in 1990, New York City's then-fiscal crisis had drastically reduced public support, which at that time provided over 50% of Wave Hill's \$2 million budget. Today, the operating budget exceeds \$6 million, with government support covering just under 20% of costs. Endowment and earned income now provide about \$1 million each in annual support for operations. A Spring Gala initiated in 1992 has become a successful annual fund-raising event.

Under Ms. French's guidance, Wave Hill has evolved into a dynamic, public-oriented cultural center with a uniquely intimate relationship with its visitors. Ms. French has rigorously

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cultivated Wave Hill's management and taken programming to a level that complements the excellence of the gardens at this internationally acclaimed site. **"Although I am confident that the transition to a new Executive Director will be smooth thanks to Kate's meticulous stewardship, she is leaving behind some very big shoes to fill,"** commented Wave Hill Board Chair Cathy Marks Weinroth.

Throughout her career, Kate French has worked to enhance and protect New York City's outdoor spaces through public-private partnerships. As an Associate Director of the Central Park Conservancy in the early 1980s, she helped build private sector support for the park during the critical first years of the Conservancy's partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. Subsequently, Ms. French became the Director of Special Events for the Parks Department and, in 1987, the Associate Director of the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation (BPRC). At BPRC, she played an instrumental role in the experimental public-private management scheme that transformed the midtown park from an infamous haven for crime into a model for public-space reclamation projects across the country.

Kate French will remain at Wave Hill through March 2008. A Search Committee, under the direction of Ms. Weinroth, is working to identify Wave Hill's next C.E.O.

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About Wave Hill

A 28-acre public garden and cultural center overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades, Wave Hill's mission is to celebrate the artistry and legacy of its gardens and landscapes, to preserve its magnificent views, and to explore human connections to the natural world through programs in horticulture, education and the arts.

Wave Hill is operated by an independent non-profit organization; its buildings and grounds are owned by the City of New York. With assistance from the Mayor, the Bronx Borough President and Bronx representatives in the City Council and State Legislature, Wave Hill's operation is supported, in part, with public funds through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts—a state agency, the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Foundations, corporations and individuals in the community contribute vital support.

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