



NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

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NEWS RELEASE

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Humanities boards have new members

The Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities announce new board members and officers elected at the winter board meeting in Lincoln Jan. 17, as well as a recent appointment to the Council by Gov. Dave Heineman.

Elected to the Foundation board are the following:

- **Tawanna Black**, director of diversity for Cox Communications in Omaha, is former director of Destination Midtown and has served on various community boards, including Girls Inc. and the Omaha chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, which she serves as president. She was recognized by the Midlands Business Journal as one of the 2006 40 Under 40 award winners.
- **Christine Harris** of Lincoln has served on the board of directors for Cedars Youth Services, the University of Nebraska Foundation, and the State of Nebraska Nominating Commission for Juvenile Judges. Her first novel, "The Gypsy in My Soul" was published in the fall of 2008.
- **Marilyn Hadley** of Kearney is the former dean of the College of Education at UNK and founder of the Senior College of Central Nebraska at UNK. She has served on the board of directors for many local and statewide organizations including the Judicial Nominating Commission. She and her husband, Galen, are co-chairs of the Kearney Public library expansion campaign.
- **Molly O'Holleran** of North Platte is a community volunteer and serves on the North Platte Public School Board and the Nebraska Association of School Boards' Legislative Committee. She has been active in local cultural organizations and is president-elect of the Nebraska Medical Association Alliance.
- **Deb Thomas** is assistant vice chancellor for business and finance at University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha and serves on the C. Louis Meyer Foundation. She was director of health and human services under Gov. Kay Orr and was director of special projects for the University of Nebraska's Office of External Affairs.
- **Susan Watts** is chair of the Humanities Department at McCook Community College and is a charter member of Leadership McCook and the McCook Arts Council, and has served on the Southwest Nebraska Community Theater Association. She is a member of the International Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

New to the Nebraska Humanities Council are the following:

- **Mary Henning** of Kearney, who was appointed by Gov. Heineman. Henning is president of the GFWC Kearney Woman's Club. She has served on several boards, including Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation, the University Foundation Grants Committee, Kearney Literacy Council, Kearney Public Library and Foundation, YWCA, and Buffalo County Historical Society. She has received the Kearney Hub Freedom Award and the MONA Guild Friend Award. Henning writes children's books and performs as a storyteller at the Minden Opera House.

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- **Steven Achelpohl**, an Omaha attorney, holds a J.D. from the University of Nebraska College of Law, where he was on the Nebraska Law Review, and a B.A. in political science from UN. He has also served for many years as the state chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party and previously chaired the Board for Visiting Nurse Health Services. In 2006, Achelpohl received the Omaha Bar Association Robert Spire Public Service Award.
- **Virginia Aita** is associate professor at the University of Nebraska College for Public Health, Division of Health Promotion, Social and Behavioral Health. She worked with grant funding for research projects, has organized numerous humanities and arts programs related to medicine, including the recent exhibit, “Here I Am And Nowhere Else: Portraits of Care” at the Bemis. Aita has served on various committees related to public health, music, ethics, and gender-related issues. She has been active in community service through various Omaha organizations, including the boards of the Junior League of Omaha, Visiting Nurse Community Health Services, and the Child Saving Institute.
- **Andrew Alexander** is professor in the Department of Language and Literature at Wayne State College. He holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Toronto. Alexander has published many articles on literature and has made numerous presentations across the country. He has served on multiple committees at Wayne State College and is on the board of the Northeast Nebraska Humane Society.
- **Taylor Keen** is in the Office of Entrepreneurship at Creighton University in Omaha and teaches courses on Native American Studies. He holds a B.A. in English literature with a certification in Native American Studies from Dartmouth College, and holds two master’s degrees from Harvard in public policy and business administration. Keen has worked extensively with Native American communities on business and community development. He has served on the Council of the Cherokee Nation, on the board of the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma and on the board of the Heart Walk in Tulsa.
- **Michael Nolan** of Norfolk is executive director for the League Association of Risk Management, through the League of Nebraska Municipalities. He holds a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is a certified economic development finance professional by the National Development Council. Nolan has been active in Norfolk community organizations and as former Norfolk city manager has worked closely with elected officials on legislation and community development, publishing numerous articles and presenting at many state and national conferences and training programs related to his work.
- **Rhonda Seacrest** has served with a wide variety of organizations ranging from environmental organizations to those that serve women and/or children to many focused on the arts and humanities. She was the founding director of the Rape and Domestic Abuse Program and the Healthy Start Program at the Great Plains Regional Medical Center in North Platte. She also co-founded the Sheldon Statewide program through the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in Lincoln and has been a board or foundation member for numerous other organizations in Lincoln, Omaha, and North Platte, including the Nebraska Cultural Endowment Advisory Council.

New officers for the Nebraska Humanities Council include Chuck Shoemaker of Hastings, chair; B.J. Reed of Omaha, vice chair; and Carol Gendler of Omaha, treasurer; and executive committee members Sara Crook of Peru and Don Pederson of Lincoln. New officers for the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities include Kim Robak of Lincoln, president; and Natalie Olson of Lincoln, vice president; Angenette Meaney of Omaha, secretary; Densel Rasmussen of Grand Island, treasurer; and executive committee member Trixie Schmidt of Lincoln.

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