



Contact: Katrina Carl
Public Relations Manager
805.884.6430
kcarl@sbma.net



SBMA Appoints New Director of Development Gina Benesh Joins Santa Barbara Museum of Art

June 3, 2016—The Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Gina Benesh as Director of Development. It is anticipated that she will officially begin her new position on July 11, 2016.

A non-profit executive for 15 years, Ms. Benesh was the Vice President of Development & Communications at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden from 2008 to 2014, where she led a \$14 million capital campaign. The campaign successfully went 7% over goal and the Garden's new Conservation Center is now under construction.

Ms. Benesh's career began in Tacoma, WA in 1999 where she grew the fundraising capacity of the Boys & Girls Clubs to serve over 12,000 children in five communities in and beyond Tacoma through two capital campaigns—one for \$6 million and the second for \$60 million. The clubs changed their name to Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound to reflect expansion to regional coverage. While directing growth campaigns, Ms. Benesh also oversaw grants, planned giving, annual giving, and major gifts. Under her watch, the operating budget increased from \$1.6 million to \$4.5 million.

SBMA's Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director Larry Feinberg states, "An excellent, widely-experienced, and dynamic fundraiser, Gina is a creative thinker with very strong management and financial skills. With talents as an actress and former ballet dancer, she also has a passion for the arts and a warm and enthusiastic demeanor. We welcome her to SBMA."

Prior to development, Ms. Benesh taught English at universities in the United Arab Emirates and in Korea. She holds master's degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Cambridge University and from Portland State University. She is the author of *Culture Shock! United Arab Emirates* which was published three times beginning in 1996, and most recently in 2008. Throughout her career, Ms. Benesh has invested in real estate and manages a portfolio of properties with her husband. While working on projects in Montana most recently, Gina kept her hand in the non-profit arena by serving on the Board of the Flathead Community Foundation and growing their women's giving circle from 64 to nearly 400 members and quadrupling their giving capacity.