**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CHAGRIN FALLS, Ohio—**

**MARY ANN BREISCH TO RETIRE AND REBECCA (BECKY) GRUSS TO BECOME NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

After 8 years as Executive Director at the Valley Arts Center, Mary Ann Breisch will retire from her position as the leader of the organization this year.

“I have so enjoyed leading VAC at this moment in time---we have been celebrating our 50th year! The opportunity to connect the community to the essential process of making art, learning about art and sharing art has been so meaningful to me. VAC is thriving because of the interest and support of a multitude of champions-our staff, board, instructors, artists, volunteers, local and regional partners, and friends of the arts. I am eager to see what vision and skills the next leader can bring to this vital organization.”

Ms. Breisch came to VAC in 2013 as a seasoned arts educator and nonprofit executive who had provided leadership and instruction for nonprofit education and arts organizations for more than 20 years. Her extensive experience in the development of multidisciplinary arts programming, visual arts education and community partnerships informed her work at VAC. Ms. Breisch heightened the awareness of the organization in the regional landscape on a number of fronts. Her work included overseeing the completion of the first sanctioned outdoor mural in the Village of Chagrin Falls, increasing community partnerships, broadening and expanding visual arts programming, strengthening the organizational structure, and enhancing the facility. The pandemic brought challenges that inspired Ms. Breisch to lead the organization to design virtual educational programming; distance learning; online gallery and gift shop stores; new community collaborations; and a reimagined Art by the Falls, VAC’s flagship outdoor art festival.

“The Valley Art Center has been fortunate to have Mary Ann’s incredible talents and skills that helped lead us into the 21st century and create a stronger, more focused and thriving art center that future generations will be proud of,” said VAC Board President Laurie Dean.

Although Breisch is leaving, the work of VAC will continue on course as the Board has selected Rebecca (Becky) Gruss as the new executive director.

“Becky brings with her a vast professional knowledge of running her own business,” Dean said. “We look forward to her leadership of VAC.”

Gruss comes to VAC with 20 years in the fast-paced and highly competitive environment of a Big Four accounting firm, including seven years as a firm Partner. After deciding to make a change, she took an idea from conception to created be.gallery, a start-up retail art gallery business in Chagrin Falls.

In addition to her business and art gallery experience, Gruss has held several roles at non-profit organizations. Most recently, she served as the Finance Chair for the Federated Church of Chagrin Falls, as a board member at The Gathering Place, the American Heart Association (Cleveland Chapter), and Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) of Cleveland, where she served as President in 2004.

“It is a privilege and honor to be taking the next step with VAC,” Gruss said. She also stated, “with my unique skill set of accounting and financial analysis, leading teams, developing relationships, collaborating with and supporting the arts community and nonprofit organizations, as well as my experience starting and managing my own art gallery business, I believe I can bring a positive “doer” attitude that would make a difference in the future of the VAC.”

Breisch’s final day with the organization will be June 30.

Contact the Valley Art Center at 440-247-7507 or valleyartcenter.org. VAC is located at 155 Bell Street in Chagrin Falls.

Valley Art Center (VAC) enriches and inspires the community through meaningful visual art education, exhibitions, events, and partnerships. VAC, a 501c3 nonprofit organization with 50 years of history, continues to thrive as the hub of the visual arts in the Chagrin Valley. Each year, VAC offers over 400 classes, workshops, and summer camps for students, from children to seniors who range from beginner to seasoned professional. VAC offers year-round onsite, offsite, and virtual classes in drawing, painting, ceramics, printmaking, sculpture, photography, jewelry, metalwork, textiles, and more. VAC’s gallery hosts over 5 exhibits annually with curated, invitational, and juried shows. VAC’s calls-to-entry draw local, regional, and national artists from the Cleveland area and beyond. The Valley Art Center Gift Shop and gallery host hundreds of unique original pieces of art for sale. VAC is engaged in numerous local and regional community partnerships.

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Mary Ann Breisch Rebecca Gruss

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