FOR RELEASE
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Chautauqua Institution names Michael E. Hill as new president
Will succeed Tom Becker, who retires in December

CHAUTAUQUA, N.Y. — Michael E. Hill, currently the president and CEO of Youth For Understanding USA, will be Chautauqua Institution’s 18th president, the Institution’s Board of Trustees has announced. Hill is an experienced leader of arts, cultural and social service organizations including Washington National Cathedral, The Washington Ballet and United Cerebral Palsy. Youth For Understanding USA is one of the world’s oldest, largest and most respected intercultural exchange programs.

“We are absolutely thrilled that Michael is coming on board. He is a high-energy, visionary leader who understands how to balance tradition and progress,” said Chautauqua Institution Board Chairman James Pardo. “Michael has already logged an incredible track record of success for a person of his years. His unique background will help Chautauqua Institution connect more deeply with the community, reach new audiences and expand our exposure on a national and international stage.”

Hill has a rich, diverse work history with a variety of organizations. In addition to holding senior management positions at several nonprofits, he has extensive experience in fundraising, programming, marketing and communications. He is an international educator and founding faculty member of the Master of Arts Management program at George Mason University, and in 2016 served as an Aspen Institute Non-Profit Leadership Fellow.

Among his achievements, Hill directed a $125 million expansion of the historic Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., securing the largest single gift ever made to a theater in the United States. At St. Bonaventure University, he oversaw the construction of a new museum complex, the addition of an artistic residency center and the quadrupling of programming at the university’s multi-venue arts complex. During his college years, he served for a time as assistant editor for The Chautauquan Daily, and later served for several seasons as a guest critic for symphony and theater while serving as Director of The Quick Arts Center at St. Bonaventure University.

“This is an incredible opportunity to help an internationally recognized, highly respected institution leverage its strengths to engage Chautauquans in new ways and to find new audiences,” Hill said. “I am honored, and I am humbled. I am passionate about Chautauqua Institution’s history and the incredible diversity of its programs. I look forward to reconnecting with the Chautauqua I remember, and listening and learning so we can raise the Institution’s visibility and further enhance its astounding reputation.”
Following Tom Becker’s retirement announcement earlier this year, the Chautauqua board appointed a committee chaired by George Snyder, immediate past chair of the Board of Trustees, to launch a rigorous national search to find a successor. The Institution retained executive search consultants Russell Reynolds Associates, which conducted a comprehensive leadership needs assessment with Chautauqua senior staff, the Board of Trustees, Chautauqua Foundation Board of Directors, major donors and other stakeholders. “Michael emerged as the unanimous selection of the search committee from a pool of incredibly talented and diverse candidates. Our search process reaffirmed the national prominence of the Institution,” said Snyder.

Hill succeeds Becker, who is retiring at the end of 2016 after 13 years as president. The two will work together in the weeks ahead to ensure a seamless transition and an exciting beginning to the 2017 season.

“We thank Tom Becker for his historic service, and we look forward to Michael Hill’s leadership and the perspective he brings from his previous positions,” Pardo said. “Since its beginnings in the 1870s, Chautauqua Institution has had a succession of dynamic, inspirational leaders driving the Institution forward. With a new president, and with a new Amphitheater about to debut, it is truly an amazing time to be a Chautauquan.”

A native of Norfolk, New York, Hill, 42, earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism at St. Bonaventure University, where he is a member of their Board of Trustees, and a master’s degree in arts and cultural management from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota. He will begin his work at Chautauqua Institution on January 1, 2017.

Click here for Hill’s full bio and portrait.

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ABOUT CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTION

The pre-eminent expression of lifelong learning in the United States, Chautauqua Institution comes alive each summer with a unique mix of fine and performing arts, lectures, interfaith worship and programs, and recreational activities. Over the course of nine weeks, more than 100,000 people visit Chautauqua and participate in programs, classes and community events for all ages — all within the beautiful setting of a historic lakeside village. According to a recent piece in the New York Times Travel section, “A week at Chautauqua is a microcosm of what we can make of our lives, if only we remember to slow down and pay attention.”