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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WAVERLY COMMUNITY HOUSE MARIA WILSON ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT AFTER 17 YEARS OF SERVICE TO NORTHEASTERN REGION**

(Scranton, PA) After 17 years of service, Executive Director Maria Wilson announced her retirement scheduled for June 2023. Maria Wilson has served as Executive Director of The Waverly Community House since April 2005, following her service on its board of trustees for an 8-year period. Since that time, she has led growth and development of operations, programs, and fundraising. Wilson's significant achievements include furthering the reach and the mission of The Comm through the creation and expansion of programs that "help families work" including:

- CommKids After-School and Preschool, both state certified childcare centers that focus on early childhood education.
- Children's Interactive Learning Center, a unique learning environment designed to engage children with cognitive and physical challenges.
- Upstairs Thrift, an upscale clothing and home goods shop for individuals and families that supports the mission of Waverly.
- The Student Volunteer Registry which offers youth a path to public community service
- A family "quiet" room.
- The Waverly Welcome Center.

Notable educational enhancements spearheaded by Wilson include The Comm Classroom and Archive which serve as a community resource for local history, and the Waverly Walking Tours and Destination Freedom Special Exhibits Gallery. The Destination Freedom project received the honor of a designation on the The National Park Service's *Network to Freedom*, an honor reserved for only one other in the region and 400 nationwide. These projects have grown in popularity and gained prominence for educating the public about the complicated history of The Underground Railroad in the small Village of Waverly.

The Comm's steadfast commitment to the arts was furthered through the creation of The Northeast Pennsylvania Film Festival, now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, and the Waverly Small Works Gallery. Each was designed to highlight and offer the community access to unique art forms and offer artists an expanded platform to share their work. Much of the history of The Comm and its impact were memorialized in the production of various small films and in the publication of The Centennial Yearbook, "Waverly and The Waverly Community House" and "Winners," a retrospective of the F. Lamot Belin Arts Scholarship.

Wilson was a driving force behind The Comm's Centennial Celebration in 2019, raising a leadership gift in the amount of \$2.5 million dollars and meeting the goal of \$5 million dollars. She led The Comm to achieve its goal of "Turning The Comm over to the next generation of stewards in as good shape as it was in 1919," with an eye to a bright future. During her tenure, the fundraising effort was enhanced

through lasting partnerships with private foundations and public support.

The Waverly Community House is a beloved structure, designed in 1919 by architect George MD Lewis to mirror Independence Hall and is part of The Waverly Historic District. Together with a proactive House and Grounds Committee of The Board of Trustees, Wilson worked to preserve and maintain the architectural integrity of an aging building for the next century of service. To that end, she was responsible for overseeing major capital improvements, including rebuilding of the iconic clock tower, the outdoor flagstone stage and cupola, site work including the bluestone terraces and entrances, parking lot and sidewalks, the tennis court facility, a state-of-the-art Robert Leather playground, and whole building custom window replacement. All these projects were completed while maintaining the original architectural design, modern building protocols, and energy conservation. Current projects include renovation of the gymnasium and theater into the Waverly Memorial Theater for Arts and Athletics, and replacement of the century old heating and ventilation system. Each project will be designed to extend and expand usage in furtherance of The Comm's century old mission of service.

Wilson will leave behind a staff that grew from 3 administrative staff to over 18. Through her leadership, The Comm successfully navigated challenges posed by the pandemic, remaining sustainable with staff and programs intact. She remarked, "The Waverly Community House is an invaluable resource that is just at the beginning of achieving its full potential. None of beloved programs and new initiatives could have been accomplished without the commitment of generous donors, a dedicated staff, board of trustees and core volunteers. Every day brings fresh challenges and fresh opportunities. I am incredibly lucky to have worked with so many talented individuals and in such a magnificent structure. The founders would have been pleased to see that the community not only embraced their early vision but had worked tirelessly to ensure that The Comm and all that it offers remains vital and evolves to meet modern needs. So many bright years ahead! "

"Maria Wilson has been a staple at The Comm for as long as I can remember. She embraced the role of Executive Director to the fullest and as a result of her dedication to the Belin Family and the Community, is leaving the organization in great health. The Comm is more than a building, it is a family, a family Maria helped grow! It is with mixed emotions; however, we have accepted her resignation, and wish her and her family all the best in her next chapter" says Michael Poremba, President of The Comm's Board of Trustees.

#### **ABOUT WAVERLY COMMUNITY HOUSE**

The Waverly Community House was founded in 1919, as a gift to the community by Margareta Belin and her family. For over one hundred years, The Waverly Community House, fondly known as "The Comm," has been fulfilling its mission to enhance the lives of individuals and families in the northeastern region by fostering educational, recreational, and cultural opportunities.

Waverly Community House has retained Catalyst Consulting Services to conduct this search on their behalf. Visit <https://catalystcs.org/about/current-openings/> for more information.