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STATEWIDE GRASSROOTS CULTURAL ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES FIRST FULL-TIME DIRECTOR
Mollie Cashwell of Lamoine to Steer Incorporation of Start-Up

PORTLAND, MAINE -- The Cultural Alliance of Maine (CAM), a groundbreaking, grassroots, statewide network, is pleased to announce the hiring of its first full-time director, Mollie Cashwell of Lamoine, ME. Ms. Cashwell is contracted to start September 1. The duties of the Director are to oversee and execute, in collaboration with a reconstituted governing body, the growth and formation of the Alliance into an independent 501C3 nonprofit by early 2023: creating and implementing networking, communications, research and advocacy programs to strengthen, advance, and deepen investment in Maine’s cultural sector. Through the remainder of July and August Ms. Cashwell will participate in a strategic tour of Maine cultural venues, events, and organizations from south to north and east to west to advance CAM and to experience and promote the cultural work of the diverse cultural subsectors and geographies of Maine: indigenous and immigrant communities; libraries; historical societies and historic preservation; nonprofit arts organizations; for-profit creative industries; artists and other cultural workers.

“We are thrilled to be bringing Mollie on board to lead this effort,” said Linda Nelson, CAM’s Interim Director since November 2021 and a member of the founding Steering Committee. “The Hiring Committee conducted a highly-successful national search and Mollie’s breadth of experience and passion for the field brought her to the top of a field of very strong, Maine-based finalists. We know she will immediately deepen CAM’s impact in this election season.”

Mollie Cashwell is a "Boomerang Mainer," born in Calais and raised in the Bangor area. She moved to Lamoine with her husband and their two young sons in 2019 from Berlin, Germany,
where she lived for five years. She is a dual U.S.-Canadian citizen with roots in Washington County and St. Stephen, New Brunswick, where her family has kept a cottage for five generations.

After leaving Maine for college in New York, Mollie spent 10 years working with organizations in New York, Lisbon, London, and Berlin. She has worked with cultural organizations stateside and in Europe including the Friedman Benda Gallery, the North Brooklyn Public Art Coalition, Goldsmiths, the London International Festival of Theatre, Nataal, and the German radio station KCRW Berlin which she helped launch. Most recently, Mollie has worked as a Campaign Consultant with Gary Friedmann & Associates in Bar Harbor performing development audits and feasibility studies, and managing the Jesup Memorial Library's $12.5 million capital campaign.

Mollie's passion for understanding Maine's cultural sector extends back 14 years or more and really took off when she was accepted to the Quimby Colony in Portland in 2011 as its first research resident, focusing on Portland's creative economy. Her undergraduate degree is in Studio Art from City College of New York, and in 2013 she completed an MA in Arts Administration & Cultural Policy at the Institute for Creative & Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she researched library policy and models in the UK, as well as evolving policies and practices surrounding artists' collaborations with archives.

“Mollie’s background is stellar and a perfect fit for CAM’s purpose and goals,” said Jennifer Hutchins, Executive Director of the Maine Association of Nonprofits which continues to host CAM as a program until its independent incorporation. “It’s as if her interests and expertise were tailor-made for this position.”

**About CAM**

The Cultural Alliance of Maine is Maine’s first coordinated, statewide industry alliance advancing the visibility and capacity of, and investment in, Maine's diverse cultural sector via collective learning, research, promotion and advocacy. Launched by an ad hoc Steering Committee of 16 Maine cultural leaders, CAM is currently engaged, with the support of Up with Community, in evolving its governance body with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion as a foundation for its formal incorporation.

In January 2022 CAM completed a year-long pilot project, under the direction of Project Director Carla Pugliese, conducting and gathering local, regional, and national research; holding focus groups; issuing surveys; and holding individual and regional meetings as part of a needs assessment to determine CAM’s most effective priorities and activities. As a component of this pilot, CAM launched CAM Convenings: regularly scheduled, virtual opportunities to bring cultural sector members together for collective learning and alliance building. CAM Convenings have included special guests from national organizations and around the state, including multiple visits from Heather Johnson, the Commissioner of the
Department of Economic and Community Development, as the cultural sector navigated the economic and reopening challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, which impacted cultural organizations and workers more severely nationally than almost any other economic sector, starkly illuminated that Maine lacked structures for the cultural sector to learn, organize, and act as a unified statewide community.

Maine’s cultural communities are vital contributors to the state’s economy and quality of life. In 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that arts and cultural industries in Maine added $1.6 billion to the state economy and employed over 16,000 Mainers. A survey conducted by the Maine Arts Commission in 2015 found that 98% of residents polled – a sample that included residents from every Maine ZIP code – indicated an interest in the arts. In 2017, according to data from the National Endowment for the Arts, 57.9% of Mainers attended an arts or cultural event and 81% consumed art via electronic media. The following year, 38.6% of adults in Maine reported personally performing or creating art.

“Maine's cultural sector is a unique and diverse place,” said Chris Newell, a member of the founding Steering Committee and former Executive Director & Senior Partner to Wabanaki Nations at the Abbe Museum, at the start of the CAM Pilot Project in 2021. “The needs of rural and all-volunteer organizations vary greatly from the needs of long established, well known cultural organizations. Developing Maine’s cultural sector is more valuable than just the economics. It's an investment in our humanity and in future generations of exceptional Mainers.”

CAM invites all members of the broad and diverse cultural communities of Maine to join in this work. Those looking to connect are encouraged to subscribe to the monthly CAM newsletter at www.nonprofitmaine.org/CAM; to watch for upcoming events in their areas; and to mark their calendars for the first CAM Convening of fall on Friday, September 9 at 9 AM. Interested parties may also email CAM at culturalmaine@gmail.com.

CAM receives and is grateful for generous support from The Onion Foundation, Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust, Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation, Libra Foundation, the Maine Community Foundation, the Maine Arts Commission, and the Maine State Library; and administrative support from the Maine Office of Tourism and the Maine Association of Nonprofits (MANP), which hosts CAM as a program.

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PHOTO CAPTION AND CREDIT: Mollie Cashwell starts as the new full-time director for the Cultural Alliance of Maine September 1. Photo courtesy Mollie Cashwell & CAM.