**Ann Bancroft Foundation**

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**Sara Fenlason named Ann Bancroft Foundation’s**

**first Executive Director**

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (April 1, 2014) -- The board of directors of the Ann Bancroft Foundation today announced that it has hired education and development veteran Sara Fenlason as the organization’s first ever executive director. She will oversee all aspects of the nonprofit, including strategic planning, revenue generation, financial management, organizational development and program operations.

The Ann Bancroft Foundation (ABF) is working to create a world where every girl has a chance to live her dream and reach her full potential. Since 1997, the foundation has awarded grants to more than 3,000 Minnesota girls – connecting them to mentors, funding and encouragement to help them reach for their highest goals. The grants support girls who have the ambition and courage to take the next step but who need help putting their dreams into action.

**Sara Fenlason**

Known as a business builder, Fenlason is highly regarded for having the ability to develop relationships at all levels in organizations. She has the proven credentials of accelerating growth, which is ABF’s transformation plan. One of Fenlason’s initial areas of focus – and significant opportunity – is to leverage a major grant from the Barry Foundation, which matches 50 percent of every dollar raised.

“Sara has exemplary experience as an accomplished strategic executive as well as in other critical areas of nonprofit management and development that are key to our foundation as we grow,” said ABF founder Ann Bancroft. “She is a perfect alignment to our mission of creating opportunities for girls.”

Fenlason comes to ABF with more than 20 years of nonprofit management and development experience, having successfully executed major funding strategies. Most recently, she was the director of institutional advancement at the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Management, where she managed corporate relations, alumni relations and individual giving. She has also served as the executive director for the Minnesota Women’s Campaign Fund’s *womenwinning*, and director of individual giving at the Guthrie Theater.

“In addition to her stellar credentials, Sara is strong and decisive with amazing energy, drive and vision,” added Bancroft. “She is simply a great fit.”

Fenlason is currently on the board of directors of the Tofte Lake Center and has served on the boards of the Minnetonka Center for the Arts and Outward Spiral Theatre Company.  She is a member of Minnesota Women Ceramic Artists (MNWCA) and is a resident artist at Northern Clay Center. Fenlason is also an active volunteer with Retrieve A Golden of Minnesota (RAGOM). She graduated from Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

“I couldn't be more honored to have been chosen to lead this respected organization,” said Fenlason.  “The Ann Bancroft Foundation has been tremendously successful and is well positioned to grow. I am excited to use my experience in non-profit management and fundraising to support girls across Minnesota as they strive to achieve their dreams.”

Fenlason will be introduced at ABF’s annual *dreamXchange* gala at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, May 1, at the [McNamara Alumni Center](http://mac-events.org/directions/) on the U of M campus. For tickets and information, contact 612-676-9484 or [www.AnnBancroftFoundation.org](http://www.AnnBancroftFoundation.org).

**ABF Grants**

ABF grants help girls take the first steps toward fresh possibilities, serving as a springboard to the next exploration while gaining a new perspective on their own abilities and goals. ABF offers two granting programs that give girls a chance to stretch, experiment, dream and play.  *Dare to Dream* grants fund cultural experiences such a music lessons, camp or experiences that enable girls to explore an interest.  *Let Me Play* grants are specific to sports and fitness experiences, allowing girls to enjoy all the benefits that sports bring to a person’s life.

“The modest grants of up to $500 can be a powerful boost at a critical stage in a girl’s life, and sometimes the grants may indeed have played a key role in a girl’s future,” said Bancroft. “Girls discover new self-confidence and self-knowledge as they open their eyes to a broader world -- and to new possibilities within themselves.”

**The Ann Bancroft Foundation**

The Ann Bancroft Foundation ([www.annbancroftfoundation.org](http://www.annbancroftfoundation.org)) supports girls to realize their highest dreams and potential. ABF exemplifies the spirit of explorer and educator, Ann Bancroft, whose leadership and personal and historic achievements have inspired all people to take on new challenges. Bancroft organized and led the first all-woman expedition to Antarctica, becoming the first woman to reach both Poles across the ice. In 2001 Bancroft and Norwegian Liv Arnesen became the first women in history to cross Antarctica's landmass.

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