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Leslie Wilcox, PBS Hawai‘i President and CEO, Stepping Down

(HONOLULU, HI) – Leslie Wilcox, President and CEO of PBS Hawai‘i for nearly 14 years, announced that she will step down from the position early next year.

“PBS Hawai‘i has been a labor of love and learning for me,” said Wilcox. “It’s been an honor to steward such a vital public service, upholding fact-based journalism and universal access to education.”

“Leslie is an extraordinary leader, an overachiever, with a heart for Hawai‘i that never quits,” said Joanne Lo Grimes, Chair of PBS Hawai‘i’s Board of Directors. “She faces challenges with calm and grace, and has led positive, transformative change throughout her tenure.”

A lifelong Hawai‘i resident, Wilcox will relocate to San Antonio, Texas, to be with an ailing family member.

For 48 years, Wilcox has worked in statewide Hawai‘i news media enterprises. As a college freshman she reported fulltime for the former Honolulu Star-Bulletin, and she became a longtime top-rated television news anchor/reporter in Honolulu. She took the helm of PBS Hawai‘i in 2007.

Earlier this year, the visiting President and CEO of PBS National, Paula Kerger, called PBS Hawai‘i “the most exceptional public television station in the country,” woven into the social fabric of community.

Grimes, who is overseeing a national search for Wilcox’s successor, said her Board is confident it will hire another outstanding leader. Nonprofit PBS Hawai‘i is the only locally owned statewide television/multimedia system in Hawai‘i.

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Wilcox has served as a national Trustee of America’s Public Television Stations. On her watch, PBS Hawai‘i earned perfect scores from national nonprofit analysts in transparency and accountability; relocated across town and built a new $30 million multimedia facility on time and debt-free; created HIKI NŌ (Hawaiian for “can do”), an innovative statewide student learning and storytelling initiative; convened diverse adult and youth voices in live televised KĀKOU Town Halls and What’s It Going to Take? events; added a new PBS KIDS 24-7 educational channel; developed short-form programming such as GET CAUGHT READING and aloha&grit; and is expanding Pacific Islands offerings. Wilcox has hosted some 330 episodes of the weekly interview program, Long Story Short with Leslie Wilcox, about individuals’ values and how their choices played out in life.

Wilcox, a recipient of awards for leadership and journalism, said, “I’m surrounded by talented, solid people. From the start, my goal was for the station to become more local, more inclusive and more interactive. I feel we achieved this, and we strive to keep achieving it every day.”

Before moving to public television station, Wilcox was a top-rated Hawai‘i news anchor, as well as a reporter, newscast producer, and debate moderator at KGMB (CBS) and KHON (NBC and later Fox). An active community volunteer, she used her media experience to spearhead major charity drives (Lōkahi Giving Project) for more than 22 years.

At the same time, Wilcox had ties to PBS. She co-anchored a weekly international program seen on PBS stations nationally, Asia Now, and for 10 years was a moderator of PBS Hawai‘i’s Dialog, the forerunner of INSIGHTS ON PBS HAWAI`I.

“I’d like to aloha all of my dear, creative colleagues and the many remarkable and kind people I’ve gotten to know along the way,” Wilcox said. “I’m grateful to PBS Hawai‘i donors for their trust and generosity. And, hands down, we have one of the best nonprofit Boards of Directors in the state. I’m especially thankful for the wise guidance of Board Chairs during my tenure--Joanne Lo Grimes, Jason Fujimoto, Robbie Alm and Neil Hannahs.”

Wilcox is a current Board member of Pacific Islanders in Communications, The Queen’s Health Systems and The Queen’s Medical Center.

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