



Press Release

February 1, 2016

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Graceful Growing Together Names former LSS/NCA CEO, Melissa Graves as Executive Director; outgoing ED Barry Lemley elected to remain as President of GGT Board

Bethesda, Maryland - Graceful Growing Together, Inc (GGT) today announced that Melissa Graves has been named Executive Director effective March 1, 2016. Barry Lemley, GGT’s current President and Executive Director will step down as Executive Director and will remain on the Board as President to assist in managing the transition and Board strategic leadership.

Melissa Graves, former CEO of Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, assumes responsibility to realize the vision and implement plans for the GGT Community Center that will be an innovative multi-use neighborhood resource for health and wellness. The GGT Center will be a 64,000 GSF facility in the heart of Downtown Bethesda that will offer multiple health and human services to the Bethesda community. Early priorities will include increasing community awareness about the project, developing plans for community programming and usage of space for nonprofits, hiring Center staff, and launching a capital campaign.

“We have been encouraged by support of our center plans as witnessed by increasing zoning approval, site plan comments and grants from Montgomery County and the Maryland Senate and House”. Said Barry Lemley. “After 7 years as the GGT Board’s founding part time Executive Director we have been able to see our plans move from vision into reality and the Board agreed that was time to hire a dedicated executive to partner with the Board to fully implement that vision and mission.”

“In Melissa Graves, we are fortunate to have selected a well-known leader with over 20 years of proven nonprofit experience with public partners, faith and community based organizations in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area” Lemley said. “The GGT Board is enthusiastic about Melissa’s leadership and the management and organizational development skills and experience she brings to GGT.

In accepting the position Melissa Graves said, *“The community center concept of GGT that brings faith, health, wellness, creativity, communal spaces and nonprofit services to downtown Bethesda will be an extraordinary contribution to Montgomery County and a model for the region. I am honored to be part of this important community project”.*



Graceful Growing Together, Inc.

About Graceful Growing Together, Inc.

Graceful Growing Together, Inc (GGT) is a nonprofit organization incorporated in Maryland in 2007 and received an IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter in 2008. We have previously been an informal outreach arm of Christ Lutheran Church providing community services in Bethesda since 1936. The GGT organization has implemented essential governance, ownership and government approvals, initial funding and has a completed new branding and strategic plan for 2015-2019. Our approved plans include the construction, nonprofit leasing and management of a 64,000 GSF Community Center designed to support our mission. GGT and Christ Lutheran Church are currently under contract land sale and construction with Bush Construction Company and financing with EagleBank. The project is currently in the design development and site approval phases and expects construction to begin in early 2017 with a goal of occupancy in early 2019. GGT will offer certain programs from its current and planned Bethesda transition site before and during construction.

GGT's **VISION** states:

Graceful Growing Together: The faith-based initiative enhancing social services for the Bethesda community: **Connect, Enrich, Innovate**

GGT's **MISSION** states:

- **Connect** the community with a convenient, safe, sustainable and affordable social services center,
- **Enrich** people's lives and help them grow through caring relationships and meaningful services,
- **Innovate** by offering a continuum of services responsive to community needs and aspirations.

As stated by Chuck Short, Special Assistant to the Montgomery County Executive "your center will be an integral part of the new Bethesda" and Gabe Albornoz, Director of Recreation for the County said "your concept is ideal for a neighborhood multi-generational health and wellness center."

For more information please visit us at <http://www.GracefulGrowingTogether.org>