

POLK BROS FOUNDATION

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Polk Bros. Foundation Names Gillian Darlow New CEO

Darlow Brings Passion for Philanthropy; Nonprofit and Civic Leadership Experience

CHICAGO – Today the Polk Bros. Foundation appointed Gillian Darlow, a leader in Chicago’s nonprofit and civic communities, as its first new CEO in almost 20 years. Darlow, who starts Jan. 7, wants to see the Polk Bros. Foundation continue to create powerful change in Chicago.

“I believe in the work of the Polk Bros. Foundation because I see the power of its grantmaking in the ambitious work of its grantees,” said Darlow. “My goal is to improve the health and effectiveness of local nonprofits and enhance the critical services they provide to Chicago’s children, youth and families.”

Since its founding in 1988, the Polk Bros. Foundation has given more than \$300 million to Chicago nonprofits. These 6,000 grants have improved access to basic human services, quality education, preventive health care and a vibrant arts community.

“Gillian is a strategic thinker who has a broad and deep knowledge of Chicago and its needs and knows how the city works,” said Sandra P. Guthman, current CEO of the Polk Bros. Foundation. “We are confident that she is the right person to continue the Foundation’s valuable contributions to improving the quality of life for all Chicagoans.”

Darlow, 45, has dedicated her career to building and strengthening civic and nonprofit organizations. She has held leadership roles in civic, arts, and education organizations, including The Field Museum, Redmoon Theater and Leadership for Quality Education.

For the past six years, Darlow has served as a principal of the Civic Consulting Alliance, a cross-sector partnership that invests more than \$15 million annually to transform how government works and how services are delivered to Chicagoans. Darlow led many of these initiatives, including Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s 2011 Transition Plan.

“Through her work with Civic Consulting Alliance, Gillian has been instrumental in the success of some of the most important city, county, and state initiatives,” said Brian Fabes, CEO, Civic Consulting Alliance. “Gillian’s work has improved the quality of life for all residents of our region. We are thrilled that nonprofits across Chicago will have the benefit of her talent and wisdom in advancing their missions.”

Darlow received an MBA and a master's in Education from Stanford University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University. She also is a founding Chicago board member of the Positive Coaching Alliance, a national nonprofit that provides youth with a positive, character-building sports experience; a member of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs emerging leaders program; and a founding board member of the new ELP Venture Philanthropy Fund, which supports entrepreneurs in education.

Darlow's arrival marks a new chapter for the Foundation. Guthman and Executive Director Nikki Will Stein are both retiring at the end of the year. Guthman will continue her term as Chairman of the Polk Bros. Foundation Board of Directors through November 2018.

Darlow is looking forward to collaborating with Guthman, other members of the board and staff, including Evette Cardona, Vice President of Programs, to carry on the Polk Bros. Foundation's mission to provide help for those in need.

"The Polk Bros. Foundation plays a vital role in improving the lives of residents and affecting change in Chicago by strengthening our nonprofit community." Darlow said, "I am fortunate to have the opportunity to deepen the Foundation's great work in the coming years."

Russell Reynolds Associates conducted the search for the new CEO.

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About Polk Bros. Foundation

The Polk Bros. Foundation was established by members of the Polk family who owned and operated the Polk Bros. chain of retail appliance and furniture stores. The Polk Bros. Foundation today supports organizations that provide direct services to Chicago communities of need. Grants, made for social services, education, cultural programs and health care, fund programs that have a measurable impact on underserved children, youth and families. The Foundation's assets have grown to more than \$400 million, with more than \$20 million in grants distributed each year. A dedicated seven-person board and staff of eleven partner with grantees in seeking solutions to the most pressing issues faced by Chicago families.