

NEW TURNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS DIRECTOR

Sementha Mathews

STORY BY CANDICE MCKINLEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY WES SEWELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Sementha Mathews was named the new Executive Director of the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts in April. Sementha will take the place of outgoing executive director Cheryl Oliver. "I'm so fortunate to have inherited a well-managed program with a superb staff and an active and productive board," Sementha said. "My initial goals are centered around building upon the current momentum and taking the center to the next level, specifically drawing attention to the economic and quality of life impact that the arts bring to our community and region."

Sementha plans to spur more interest and support for the local arts and culture industry, embracing the ideas and input of patrons and stakeholders to continue to provide meaningful programs and activities that reflect the beautiful and cultural aspects of life in our community.

Lowndes/Valdosta Arts Commission Board President Bob Goddard said, "I have no doubt Sementha will carry on the rich legacy provided her by Cheryl Oliver. The Succession Planning Task Force was struck by Sementha's zest for life, unwavering work ethic, and passionate support for the Turner Center over the years. A regular at gallery openings, Presenter Series shows, and other Turner Center events, she was well known around the Center before applying for the role of Executive Director. And while no one will ever 'replace' Cheryl, we believe we've chosen the right individual to take us to the next level of our artistic endeavors."

"The staff of the Turner Center for the Arts has collectively entered a period of great anticipation with the arrival of

Sementha Mathews as executive director," said Oliver. "She brings to the Center a gust, not just a breath, of fresh air and an infectious energy. While leaving an organization I love after a decade of service is difficult, having confidence in Sementha's leadership abilities makes it easier."

Sementha has worked for the City of Valdosta for nearly 12 years as the Public Information Officer. She also developed and managed the city's overall internal and external communication strategies, supervised the Metro Channel 17 operation, and promoted the positive image of the city.

A graduate of the University of Hawaii with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism, Sementha also holds a Master's degree of Public Administration from Valdosta State University. She currently serves as Adjunct Professor in VSU's Communication Arts Department and as a trainer in the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. She is the 2018 president of the South Georgia Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America in Valdosta.

Her family includes husband, Larry Mathews; three adult children, Micah, Alexander and Noelani; and two German Shepherds, Maile and Kona. Sementha says she wakes up daily with an excitement about serving others in her new role. "I look forward to serving and working with the staff, members of LVAC, and Center members and supporters to collectively make a positive impact on the creative and educational culture, the successful and prosperous future of our arts community, and the quality of life of our diverse, metropolitan area."