



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COCA ANNOUNCES HOPE ABRAMOV AS BOARD PRESIDENT, ALONGSIDE NEW BOARD MEMBERS & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

*Board Leadership & New Board Members Bring Extensive Experience to Sustain Momentum Following
Milestone Anniversary Year*

ST. LOUIS (October 8, 2026)—[COCA – Center of Creative Arts](https://www.cocastl.org), a national leader in innovative arts education, announced the appointment of key leadership to its Board of Directors, including Hope Abramov as Board President, Executive Committee roles, and four new Board Members, for the 2026–2027 year. COCA's Board of Directors is positioned to sustain momentum and guide the organization into the next chapter following a milestone anniversary year.

"I am pleased to recognize Hope Abramov as COCA's new Board President. Hope is committed to our mission and brings a wealth of leadership experience, thoughtful guidance, and strategic insight to COCA," said Indigo K. Sams, COCA President & CEO. "As the mother of a COCA alum who is pursuing a career in the performing arts, Hope understands firsthand the impact that arts education and artistic opportunities can have on young people."

Abramov joined COCA's Board of Directors in 2021 and served as the Chair of the HR Committee for the past four years. Abramov is a Partner and Co-Chair of the Labor & Employment Practice Group at Thompson Coburn LLP. She has more than 25 years of litigation experience and manages cases throughout the U.S. Abramov's national practice focuses on helping clients navigate complex labor matters, as well as employment discrimination claims, wage and hour matters, and health and safety issues, among others.

Joining the Executive Committee are:

- **Suzanne Johnson**, Community Volunteer. Johnson has served on COCA's Board since 2018 and will serve as Board Secretary. As an active participant on the Development Committee, Johnson has been a strong advocate for COCA's mission and fundraising efforts.
- **Lesley Sanchez**, CPA and Partner in Audit and Assurance at Anders. Sanchez has been recognized as a Missouri Society of CPAs Woman to Watch, a St. Louis Small Business Monthly Top Accountant, and a Forbes Best-in-State CPA. Sanchez will serve as Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee.

The new members of the Board of Directors are:

- **Dario Castagna**, General Partner and Head of Portfolio Solutions and Portfolio Optimization at Edward Jones. Castagna has served on COCA's Associate Board for two years and brings expertise in investments, portfolio management, financial strategy, and long-term organizational growth.
- **Rob Merlin**, Attorney with Ray B. Marglous, P.C., and a luxury travel advisor with SmartFlyer. Merlin brings experience in client advocacy, business development, relationship management, and entrepreneurship.

- **Tamyka Perine**, Managing Director and founder of Prestige Consultants. Perine advises small businesses and nonprofits on accounting, strategic planning, operations, and event management. This year, she has been elected as the COCA Associate Board (CAB) President after serving on CAB since 2022.
- **Dave Thompson**, Senior Vice President, Chief Growth Officer and President of Population Health at Mercy. Thompson's expertise in healthcare strategy, growth planning, population health management, finance, and organizational transformation will provide valuable perspective as COCA continues to expand its reach and deepen its impact throughout the region.

2026–2027 Executive Committee

Hope Abramov, Partner and Co-Chair of the Labor & Employment Practice Group, Thompson Coburn LLP
 Bill Bradley, Marketing & Communications Independent Agent
 Lisa Guirl, Community Volunteer
 Suzanne Johnson, Community Volunteer
 Tyler Meyr, Executive Director, Lamar Johnson Collaborative
 Ricky Nix, Jr., President, Butler's Pantry
 Lesley Sanchez, Partner, Audit and Assurance, Anders
 Brian Thomas, Interim Head of School, Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School

2026–2027 Board Members

Thesina Adams, Sr. Lead Product Owner, Wells Fargo Advisors
 Lael Bagnall, Community Volunteer
 Nancy Barnes-Ault, VP & Community Relations Officer, Regions Bank
 Ann Beatty, Founder/CEO, Beatty Leadership
 Erica Bouchard, Wealth Advisor, Focus Partners Wealth
 Carolyn Brown (Littlefield), Sr. Director of Innovation, Anheuser-Busch
 Hunter Brown, Partner, Moneta Group
 Rebecca Brown, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives, Washington University in St. Louis
 Dario Castagna, General Partner and Head of Portfolio Solutions and Portfolio Optimization, Edward Jones*
 Brian Chao, Chief Financial Officer, Starkloff Disability Institute
 Gina Eanes, Financial Advisor, Prudential Advisors
 Laurie Garland, Owner, By Invitation Only
 Kurt Gerdes, President, National, Business Development Executive, TransLine 49 Environmental Services
 Erica Glanz, Sr. Counsel – Employment & Sr. Director, Diversity & Inclusion, Bunzl Distribution
 Susan Lynch, Community Volunteer
 Steve Mackin, President and CEO, Mercy
 Merritt Mamroth, Vice President, Single Coverage Banker, JP Morgan
 Rob Merlin, Attorney with Ray B. Marglous, P.C., and a luxury travel advisor with SmartFlyer*
 Daffney Moore, Consultant
 Tamyka Perine, Managing Director and Founder, Prestige Consultants*
 Katie Schankman, Senior VP of Client Development, Partner, Contemporary Productions
 Meg Schneithorst, President, St. Louis Region, Enterprise Bank & Trust
 Dave Thompson, Senior Vice President, Chief Growth Officer and President of Population Health, Mercy*
 Ann VonAllmen, Residential Restoration Specialist & Project Manager

**New Board Member for 2026–2027*

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is *to enrich lives and build community through the arts*. For 40 years, COCA has served as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves more than 65,000 students, audience members, artists, and families from more than 300 zip codes every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the

country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of more than 200 artists at the heart of their work in schools, community centers, local businesses, cultural organizations, and onsite at its campus in University City.