



"During her tenure (at Straz Center), Leigh was a consummate creative, a firebrand bursting with new ideas and expert at making connections."

**Julie Garisto,
Creative Loafing**

"I can't wait to see where the next burst of inspiration will take Wendy Leigh. She works well independently. She works in small organizations. She works in large organizations. Give her a challenge and she goes to work."

**Paul Wilborn,
Executive
Director at The
Palladium**

*"Wendy's commitment and loyalty to an organization is immeasurable. She embraces the mission and works tirelessly to ensure success. She is more than willing to work with colleagues and lay leaders to see a program through and, most notably, she has personal investment in each program. " **Allison Oakes, Head of School, Hillel Academy***

Professional Summary

1. Highly accomplished, visionary, award-winning, creative leader/executive with vast experience in events, program design and execution, community relations, development/fundraising, marketing, PR, entertainment, professional theatre, performing arts, education, senior level administration, and change management with expertise in building community loyalty to support the arts and destinations.
2. Successful entrepreneur specializing in start-ups and "placemaking" -- including the creation of three successful start-ups -- The **LOFT Theater**, the **Shimberg Playhouse** and the **Patel Conservatory** - a proven track record in transforming new (and unnoticed) destinations into household names.
3. Adept at working with community partners, executive committees and Board of Trustees -- Straz Center, **University Area Community Center (UACDC)**, **Hillel Academy**, the **Franciscan Center & Unity of Tampa**
4. Successful at navigating major transitions in organizational leadership

Core Competencies

- Business Development
- Negotiations/Contracts
- Start-ups/Placemaking
- Financial Projections
- Visioning Major Initiatives
- Designing Fundable/Revenue Generating Programs
- Marketing/Media Development
- Building Sustainable Strategic Partnerships and Systems
- Donor Cultivation
- Oversight of Major Projects
- Strategic Planning
- Curriculum Development
- Community Engagement
- Public Speaking/Public Relations

Unity of Tampa is a nondenominational spiritual community in which everyone is welcome, and all faiths are honored.

INTERIM CEO – Contract Position

- Stepped into a challenging, divisive culture after minister's position was terminated
Served as liaison with board and staff and volunteers
- Formalized staff meetings with structure, systems and accountability
- Identified problematic, difficult staff and board issues and resolved them
- Secured the Core Transitional Minister, that ultimately became the church minister
- Eliminated the need to bring in organizational consultants - significant savings of time and money
- Increased social media presence **by 70%**
- Initiated a Facebook Live weekly music event
- Redirected and redesigned the monthly congregational zoom meeting; creating positive engagement and activities
- Increased attendance and community interest with children's programs
- Expanded the marketing of the streamed live services

THE FRANCISCAN CENTER, TAMPA, FL

March 2019- March 2020

The Franciscan center is a private, nonprofit retreat center located on 8 acres on the Hillsborough River.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Recruited by Young Search Partners Executive Search Firm to provide strategic, visionary influential leadership utilizing my skills, passion and commitment to implement the values and goals of the Franciscan Center.

- Renegotiated contracts with vendors and re-established more collaborative relationships realizing **between 40%-70% savings on monthly/annual costs.**
- Rebranded to create consistent, clear messaging showing competitive advantage and our distinguishing factors of who we were, what we did and where we were located
- Doubled the Facebook likes **in one year (1,500 -3K)**; garnered more publicity (radio, TV and print) than ever in its history (over 75 features/mentions)
- Recruited and successfully rebuilt the Board of Directors with 9 new highly qualified and influential professionals and secured an expert to conduct board training, pro bono.
- Began the creation of SOP's, event resumes and overall organizational structures
- Launched new programs and partnerships: yoga with Kodawari studios, a book-signing/speaker series and professional development
- Conducted over 150 tours with longstanding VIP community members and represented the organization at numerous events (distributed over 1,000 business cards in one year)

*"Wendy is one of most creative people with whom I have ever worked. Her commitment to this organization, this community and the mission of performing arts and performing arts education is second to none, Through her work with the conservatory, she helped develop one of the leading educational programs in the nation and a conservatory that became fully accredited in 2012." **Judy Lisi, President/CEO – Straz Center***

*"Wendy has the moxie to launch projects and the clarity to see them through to completion. She thinks "outside the box" like an artist and implements like a banker. Wendy is capable of building durable frameworks and establishing self-supporting systems." **Doug Cooney, Writer, Producer, Educator***

ASSOCIATIONS AND AWARDS

Member - Screen
Actors Guild

**Distinguished
Alumni USF** -
Dean's Award for
Outstanding
Service to the
Arts

**Best Artistic
Director** - Weekly
Planet

Best Director -
Weekly Planet

**Emerging Leader
Program** - Bank
of America
Selection

**Board of
Directors** - Real
Estate Lives

**Core Committee
Member** -
ArtSpace Tampa

HILLEL ACADEMY, TAMPA, FL

March 2017- July 2018

Hillel Academy is the only accredited private Jewish Day School in the region, with an inspiring mission.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- Recruited by board president to create a new development department and lead efforts in increasing brand awareness, marketing, public relations and enrollment.
- Greatly increased morale and visibility via press and Facebook campaign: more press (radio, television and print) than in organizational history in just one year and tripled the number of Facebook likes and engagement.
- Engaged dozens of loyal and diverse network of community connections and contacts to help this organization.
- **Raised over \$100,000 with the combined appeal and gala** by overseeing and participating in two fundraising galas, as well as annual appeal.

UNIVERSITY AREA COMMUNITY CENTER.

August 2015 - March 2017

The University Area CDC is 50,000 square foot multi-purpose center that is the focal point of the community providing critical service to thousands of residents

CHIEF DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OFFICER

- Recruited by two board members to create a new development department and oversee marketing and public relations efforts with the goal to increase visibility, consistent messaging, and to launch campaigns to reignite and increase individual donations and revenue generating services.
- Quadrupled the amount of press in all areas: television, radio and print on a significant basis by bringing in a new publicist and generating creative ongoing ideas for stories.
- Implemented a board resource development committee and began monthly donor cultivation events.
- Negotiated new partnership arrangements with current community rental clients and created more intentional, meaningful partnerships with longtime regular constituents (CAST homeschool Theater and New Tampa Players) as well as bringing in new ones (VYB Dance Festival) increasing revenue and volunteer base and visibility of organization.
- Engaged lifelong colleagues to support efforts - DJs, photographers, performers, community supporters to donate their time and pro bono, including Tony Award winning Broadway director, Kenny Leon
- Devised and launched a new brick engraving fundraising plan in a donors' circle that raised over \$55,000 in bricks alone
- **Raised \$95,000 (approximately 100% increase from previous year)** by overseeing major Annual Gala/Fundraiser,

The Straz Center is the largest performing arts center south of the Kennedy Center and provides 4100+ events yearly in its 5 theatres. A 45,000 square foot addition serves as the Patel Conservatory which provides world-class performing arts education in dance, theatre and music.

**TEACHING
EXPERIENCE**

- Bennington College, July Program, Drama
- Hillsborough County Public Schools, High School Drama and English

EDUCATION

**Bachelor of Arts
in Theatre**

University of
South Florida

**Bachelor of Arts
in Education –**

Columbia College

VICE PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION/DIRECTOR OF THE PATEL CONSERVATORY

- Hired to create, open and fully manage the nationally recognized, Patel Conservatory. Provides hundreds of classes weekly in dance, theatre and music to over 1000 students, both onsite and offsite, and produces hundreds of events/programs annually; fully responsible for the delivery of all services and products while ensuring alignment to Straz Center objectives.
- Designed initial curriculum and tuition pricing, created initial policies and procedures, developed budgets, hired staff and integrated existing education programs to launch the Patel Conservatory.
- Maintained oversight of 20 full-time and 60+ adjunct/part-time staff, students, operational functions, marketing, enrollment, program development and budget management of 2.5M, **with growth margins of 10% per year.**
- Expanded outreach programs to provide at-risk students with free music, dance and theater instruction as well as master classes with touring Broadway shows, which required initiating and negotiating school partnerships.
- Initiated, created, negotiated and executed a partnership with the Orlando Ballet School which led to the creation of Next Generation Ballet at the Patel Conservatory.
- Created the Annual Spotlight Awards event (4th year), as a successful, red carpet fundraising event that honors graduating seniors and features their artistic talents, **raising \$35K annually, tripling amount raised from first year.**
- **Designed and created \$150K in scholarships/financial assistance** to provide opportunities to underserved students
- **Achieved accreditation from SACS CASI**, unique accomplishment in the State for multidisciplinary conservatories.
- Served as leader on the Education Committee and Straz Board of Trustees, was a member of Straz Center Executive Leadership Team, project leader on Straz Center Diversity initiative, speaker at major gatherings for both.

- Initiated meeting with CEO Judy Lisi which led to launching the Off Center Theater, dedicated to showcasing local artists and bold, alternative programming; theatre now known as the Shimberg Playhouse.
- Managed the creation of this theater from building the facility to emerging as a successful provider of fresh theater.
- Created local artist group to work with national artists in residence which evolved as a festival of one-person shows.
- Established women's playwright contest for fully produced plays, resulting in residency opportunities for winners.

THE LOFT THEATRE

1987-1993

FOUNDER/OWNER

- Opened an alternative theater two days before the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center with no funding, staff or equipment
- Had a BYOC (Bring your Own Chair ...and leave them) opening night to obtain seating
- Was open 50 our 52 weekends every year and switched out shows every two to three weeks, including week night show and late night shows.
- Increased the pool of women directors, and all new directors, ten fold with a Ten for The LOFT annual fundraising event (ten new directors directing ten ten minute plays - \$10 admission)
- A leading producer of gay and lesbian as well as underserved populations' work
- Produced several world premieres, presented and produced hundreds of shows
- Was an official venue for the Florida Dance Festival for years
- Secured prestigious membership in the NPN (National Performance Network)
- Unprecedented ability to survive primarily on box office revenue



“You want to talk about someone that can ‘connect the dots,’ loop in people of note, and sprinkle some celebrity? Yep, Wendy Leigh does that.”

_ T.J. Couch

*Vice President
Couch Family Foundation*