



**Michael Ortiz Tapped as Interim CEO for the Los Angeles County Fair Association
as Jim Henwood Decides to Step Down**

Pomona, CA – (March 30, 2016): The Board of Directors for Los Angeles County Fair Association (LACFA) announced today that Michael Ortiz, Chair of the Board and former president of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, will serve as Interim CEO as current CEO Jim Henwood has decided to step down. Ortiz will take over the running of the LACFA until a permanent CEO is selected. He will also remain as Board Chair as allowed under LACFA By-laws.

Ortiz has been a Board member of LACFA Board since 2003 and Chairman of the Board since 2014. Now retired, Ortiz previously served as the fifth president of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona from August 2003 to October 2014. He served on several board committees including By-laws, Visioning and Pomona Blue Ribbon Committee. He continues in an advisory role at Cal Poly Pomona for agricultural and education programs.

In 2005, he was listed as one of the top 100 most influential Hispanics in *Hispanic Business* magazine. In 2008, *Latino* magazine noted him as one of the Top 25 Latinos in Education.

"I am honored to step into the role of Interim CEO during this time of transition," said Ortiz. "Jim Henwood was hired 20 years ago to continue the great tradition of the LA County Fair, promote LACFA's agricultural and education programs – as well as to develop LACFA into an economic engine for the region and a dynamic asset to the community. With Board support, I want to help the organization maximize our current programs and resources."

In June 2015, Henwood announced to the Board his plans to leave the LACFA at the end of 2016 when his contract expired. He has been working with the Board on a transition plan and a search for his successor was launched in the fall of 2015. Recently Henwood informed the Board of his preference to step down early to allow for an interim leader to assume the position.

"I am very proud of my 20-year tenure at LACFA and have seen this organization through great growth and innovation. However, lately I have become a distraction from the great work that LACFA does. I love this organization too much to let that happen. Accelerating a change in leadership will allow LACFA to refocus on its important role in the community," Henwood said.

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LACFA is a 501c(5) which allows the organization to have for-profit enterprises that help to fund nonprofit programs such as the Career & Technical Educations Center (CTEC), the Millard Sheets Art Center and the Child Development Center (CDC).

The Board hired Jim in 1995 to grow the Fair and the organization, improving its services to the Southern California region and local communities.

"Fairplex was poised to launch into year-round activities then," said long-time board member Stephen Morgan. "The grounds and surrounding area needed significant capital improvements to operate year-round. We had unused land and, except for the weeks the Fair was running, we weren't doing as much with the local community nor helping the local economy as we do now. As an expert in hospitality and guest experience, Jim Henwood brought the knowledge we needed to move into the future and enhance the Fair event for an evolving, diverse Southern California market."

Henwood's focus on guest experience and his philosophy on the importance of brand improved the guest experience at the LA County Fair event and dimensionally repositioned Fairplex as a significant destination in Southern California. During his tenure, Henwood built a state-of-the-art Conference Center, renovated the hotel, constructed a five-acre urban Farm, strengthened relationships with surrounding communities and added multiple LACFA-produced events and grew a year-round event business. The Learning Centers were launched which today serve more than 150,000 students in innovative ways each year including agricultural awareness, hospitality industry training and more.

Speaking of the transition, Morgan said, "Mike Ortiz has a great reputation as a person who enhances organizations through community relations and partnerships. He understands agriculture and agriculture education for today's urban environment. I think his tenure will be an effective bridge until the new CEO is selected, allowing the LACFA to move into its next chapter of success."

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About Fairplex:

Fairplex is a private, non-profit 501(c)5, self-funding organization that is not governed by the county or state, and receives no government subsidies for daily business operations. Under the direction of the Los Angeles County Fair Association, the Fairplex provides education, entertainment and fun to Southern California. The Fairplex hosts the annual LA County Fair and promotes agriculture and agricultural programs throughout the year. It also builds stronger communities and economic opportunity through businesses such as its conference center and hotel which help support nonprofit and educational programs such as The Learning Centers, serving 150,000 students a year.