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**826michigan Welcomes a New Executive Director to Lead Organization Out of the Pandemic and Revitalize Vision Moving Forward**

**Detroit, MI**—826michigan, a non-profit youth writing center serving school-aged students in Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Ypsilanti, is proud to announce that **Megan Shuchman** will return to southeastern Michigan, where she was born, to lead the organization into its next chapter. For the past decade, Shuchman has helmed education programs for the nationally renowned Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Chicago, IL) where programs under her purview reached 15,000 teens annually. 826michigan is thrilled to have secured Shuchman, whose experience in strategic visioning, student-centered arts programming, and community partner building have made her a leader in Chicago’s arts education community.



Current Board President, Sean Emery, who has been part of the 826michigan Board since 2015, shares of Shuchman, “We are tremendously excited to welcome Megan aboard as our next Executive Director. Her energy, enthusiasm for the mission, and exceptional experience in arts-based education are a perfect fit to propel us forward into a future of expanded community partnership and inspired, student-focused creativity. It has been an absolute joy getting to know Megan over the past few months and we look forward to introducing her to our partners and students very soon. We know they will feel the same. There is nothing but wonderful opportunity ahead with her at the helm, and we are eager to begin the journey with her.”

Shuchman adds, “What an honor to be chosen to lead 826michigan for the next exciting chapter of this organization, which boasts not only an esteemed national reputation but most importantly deep roots in Ann Arbor, Detroit, and Ypsilanti where it has used the unique power of storytelling to serve over 25,000 students in the past decade. I am grateful to Executive Director Amanda Uhle and my predecessor Dr. Naimah Wade for grounding 826michigan as a leader in arts programming for students grades K–12 throughout southeastern Michigan.

It has been my honor and privilege to work with colleagues at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in service of youth across the Chicagoland area for the past 16 years. I am lucky to have collaborated with some of the very best artists, educators, and partners who, like me,

understand the absolutely pivotal role of arts in amplifying student voice and strengthening communities. I look forward to using all I've learned from my years in Chicago as I take the lead of 826michigan. Young people not only want but *need* the opportunity to fully return to programs like 826michigan that provide them with community, confidence, and purpose. We know how deeply vital the arts are to *their* recovery from the pandemic and thanks to tireless efforts from staff, volunteers, and students, 826michigan will be at the forefront of this crucial re-emergence.”

In the coming year, 826michigan is poised to fully return to free in-person programming in schools and other community spaces in Ypsilanti, Detroit, and Ann Arbor. The organization will also continue to offer students the opportunity to write across distances with free, asynchronous writing kits and a selection of virtual workshops in addition to doing what it does best: amplifying student voice by professionally publishing student work in books, online, in video and audio formats, and through live performances.

Shuchman is moving her family from Chicago over the summer, including situating her daughter for her start as a kindergartener in the public school system. She will be on the ground as of early September, at which point 826michigan will host several open houses in each of their service cities so that the wider 826michigan community can meet their new leader. Megan is available by email now at [megan.s@826michigan.org](mailto:megan.s@826michigan.org). She very much looks forward to hearing from you!

***About Megan Shuchman (she/hers)*** Megan Shuchman spent 15 years at Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Chicago, IL) most recently in the role of Director of Education, wherein she managed programming to serve 15,000 teens, teachers and community members each year. This included oversight of in-school residency, teacher training and teen programs as well as creation of an initiative called City Connections, focused on generating equitable partnerships with community-based organizations that use the arts to empower young people. Shuchman and her team inaugurated programming for the theater's first-ever dedicated education space, The Loft, which opened its doors in Fall 2021.

Shuchman also taught high school students and adults for over fifteen years as a professional theatre practitioner in Chicago, including through a course with the University of Illinois at Chicago on teaching artistry and arts education and served on Ingenuity Incorporated's Advocacy and Community Engagement Panel, dedicated to ensuring quality arts education for every student in every neighborhood in every Chicago Public School. Alongside a decade of work as a freelance theater director, Shuchman is a member of 2nd Story, a collective of artists working to build community through the power of storytelling.

Before moving to Chicago in 2006, Shuchman was a lead volunteer for the Michigan Women's Justice Clemency Project and an executive member of the Prison Creative Arts Project housed in the University of Michigan, through which she produced plays in prisons and juvenile detention centers around the state.

Shuchman is an alumna of the University of Michigan, proud mama to Avery and Jonah, and grateful wife to Kelly Mitchell.

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**826michigan** inspires school-aged students to write with skill and confidence in collaboration with adult volunteers in their communities. We serve students in Detroit, Ann Arbor, and

Ypsilanti with writing and tutoring programs. We also have two [robot shops](#) that support our free student programs.

Our programs uphold a culture of creativity and imagination and support students in establishing strong habits of mind. We believe that with one-on-one attention from caring adults, students improve their academic performance, develop a sense of belonging, and discover the unique value of their voices. All of our programs are challenging and enjoyable, and ultimately strengthen each student's power to express ideas effectively, creatively, confidently, and in their individual voice.

In 2002, internationally-acclaimed author Dave Eggers (*A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, McSweeney's) and award-winning educator Nínive Calegari opened a writing and tutoring center to support overburdened teachers by connecting community members with students who could use their help the most. The space they chose was 826 Valencia Street in the Mission District of San Francisco. Today, the 826 Network serves close to 350,000 students ages 6 to 18 each year via 826 Digital and through nine chapters across the country.