

Gardens hires development director

Daily staff report
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VAIL — Sandy Gregorak joined the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in August as development director, a newly created, full-time, staff position.



SANDY GREGORAK

“While our work here depends on private donations, we push on toward some very important goals,” said Nicola Ripley, the gardens’ longtime horticultural chief who assumed the role of director earlier this year. “It’s a new beginning for the gardens, and it was a strategic decision to hire a development director. The Board of Trustees and I believe Sandy has the perfect set of skills — organizational, communicational and interpersonal — to help take us where we want to go.”

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, at 8,250 feet above sea level, is the highest elevation botanical garden in the world,

providing free access to an estimated 100,000 visitors annually. Open to the public 365 days per year, its mission is to conserve plants of the American West and inspire passion for plants in high-altitude communities through beautification, conservation, education and research programs.

Born in British Columbia and raised in the Pacific Northwest, Gregorak came to Vail in 2008. An attorney, lifelong skier, hiker, backpacker, distance runner, pianist and mother of two children, she immediately fell in love with the gardens, she said.

“I felt a huge energy for the positive, forward motion of Betty Ford Alpine Gardens from everyone in the organization,” Gregorak said. “I am extremely enthusiastic about the opportunity to be part of this team.”

It’s her long career, however, as a high-powered litigation attorney and law firm director specializing in labor and employment cases for clients in the hospitality industry, such as Hyatt, Four Seasons and Westin — along with her experience as a volunteer fundraiser for her children’s private

school in San Francisco — that makes her uniquely qualified for her new role as development director at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, she said.

Gregorak’s arrival at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens coincides with the town of Vail — in conjunction with improvements to Ford Park recently approved by voters — earmarking funds from its real-estate transfer tax for use by the gardens. Among other improvements, the gardens can now move forward with plans to create a new entrance from the parking lots on South Frontage Road.

All of this further energizes Gregorak’s commitment to enhancing the vibrancy of the Gardens, she said, starting with a new campaign to build its endowment fund. Already in its early stages, the campaign goal is to raise \$3 million in endowment-restricted funds over the next two years, she said, adding the campaign will have its official launch early next year.

For more information, call 970-476-0103 or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.



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