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Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance names executive director

State College, PA, April 25, 2023 – The **Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance (HVSEA)** announced the hiring of Eric Engelbarts, STS, to lead the effort to elevate Happy Valley’s standing as a premier sports and entertainment destination.

Engelbarts started his new role as executive director on April 24.

“An excellent pool of talent expressed interest in the executive director position,” said HVSEA Board Chair William Oldsey, Penn State University trustee emeritus and retired president of McGraw-Hill Education. “Eric emerged as the best of the best. We are very fortunate to have him leading the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance team.”

Since 2012, Engelbarts served as executive director of Michigan Sports Alliance, where he created and grew the State Games of Michigan. The Games encompass 50+ sports, hosting 10,000+ participants at 45+ venues, with an annual estimated economic impact of \$3.25 million. Additionally, Engelbarts piloted a second sports hub and successful launch for Winter Games in Marquette, MI, among other noteworthy accomplishments. Prior experience also includes time with the Alabama Sports Festival, West Michigan Sports Commission and the National Congress of State Games.

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“Eric has a wealth of experience and a track record of success in the sports and entertainment field,” Oldsey said. “Working closely with Centre County and Penn State, the Alliance is well positioned to build on the exciting things starting to happen in Happy Valley in the athletic and entertainment arenas.”

Engelbarts received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration from Western Illinois University in Macomb, IL, and a Master of Education in Sport Management and Recreation from Springfield College in Springfield, MA.

“The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, search committee, and the Centre County community at large have been very welcoming to me and my family throughout the hiring process,” Engelbarts said. “I look forward to leading the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance in bringing visitors to the area to boost the local economy through sports and entertainment tourism.”

The HVSEA will operate as a parallel, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a separate board that will govern HVSEA activity, with HVAB staff supporting the Alliance’s scope of work.

The HVSEA is housed out of offices at the HVAB’s main visitor center at 204 W. Beaver Ave. in State College.

“Eric’s hiring is an exciting development for the Alliance, and for all of those who embraced the vision of what creating the HVSEA could mean for Centre County and the area,” said HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith. “We look forward to working with Eric and the HVSEA Board as they work to capitalize on the tremendous opportunity we see for Happy Valley to grow into a sought-after destination for marquee events and tournaments.”

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