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## Sharon Sobol Jordan next leader of United Way of Greater Cleveland

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Sharon Sobol Jordan

Photo / United Way of Greater Cleveland

Sharon Sobol Jordan has been appointed the next CEO and president of United Way of Greater Cleveland, succeeding [Augie Napoli](#) when he [retires in September](#).

Her appointment was announced by Paul Dolan, chairman and CEO of the Cleveland Guardians and chair of United Way of Greater Cleveland's board, in a news release June 27. Jordan will become the first female CEO of the organization in its 122-year history.

"Sharon is a proven and experienced CEO and one of Cleveland's strongest leaders in the fight against poverty," Dolan said in the release. "She is a veteran of nonprofits with a passion for solving big problems and has dedicated her career to advancing equity and justice – it is not only what she does, but also core to who she is as a person and as a professional."

Napoli, who announced his retirement after serving in the position since June 2016, will continue in his role through September to ensure a "smooth and seamless transition with Jordan," the release said. Her expected start date is Sept. 30.

Jordan, who is a member of the Cleveland Jewish Publication Company Board of Directors, comes to United Way with leadership experience in a career that has crossed sectors, disciplines and boundaries, according to the release. She is the founder and CEO of OpenSpace Solutions LLC, where she has advised and helped leaders and organizations. One such organization is DigitalC, a Cleveland-based nonprofit digital equity tech startup, where she currently serves as interim CEO.

Before OpenSpace, Jordan served as president and board member at Unify Labs, where she helped its co-founders and supported the organization in launching this nonprofit tech innovation center with the mission of powering inclusive prosperity.

"United Way of Greater Cleveland's core belief that social and economic change cannot be achieved without racial justice, together with its focus on permanently disrupting the cycle of intergenerational poverty, deeply resonates with me," Jordan said in the release. "I have shared this

same commitment and passion in my own work over the last 35 years, and joining the United Way team is completely aligned with my values and sense of purpose. I'm truly honored the board selected me to continue United Way of Greater Cleveland's path forward, and I am extremely grateful to Augie, the board and the entire United Way team for building such a strong foundation for United Way to continue to be an impactful partner and force for change throughout our region."

United Way's board began a national search for Napoli's successor last fall, aiming to announce a new leader of the downtown Cleveland-based organization before his retirement – then planned for the end of June. Board member Brian Richardson, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of Independence, Ohio-based Covia, served as head of the 13-member search committee, with the assistance of search firm Isaacson, Miller. It received interest from a pool of nearly 50 candidates, the release said.

The board vote to approve Jordan was unanimous.

"Sharon has a track record of successfully leading and making change within organizations from the inside out," Dolan said. "Sharon is a coalition and relationship builder and has built trusted, lasting relationships across the Greater Cleveland community. She enjoys doing this important anti-poverty work in partnership with others because she knows no one organization or person can solve the big problems our community faces alone."

United Way's mission is to interrupt the cycle of poverty treating its symptoms, including homelessness and hunger, through its Community Hub for Basic Needs and upending its root causes, such as racism and access to stable housing, through its Impact Institute, according to the release.

Jordan has held leadership positions in the region's social services network, including serving as chief of staff for Cuyahoga County – the No. 1 funder of human services in the region – where she drove early childhood education expansion, workforce systems transformation, the first unified strategic plan and the formation of the county's first Innovation Office. She also has served as president and CEO of The Centers for Families and Children, one of Ohio's oldest and largest private nonprofit human service corporations.

In these roles, she led the successful merger and integration of three social service agencies that immediately scaled key business lines and ignited the growth of the combined organization, according to the release. Jordan joined The Centers after a public service career with the city of Cleveland as director of law and special counsel to Mayor Michael R. White. She began her career as an associate at the Cleveland law firm Schneider Smeltz Speith Bell LLP (formerly known as Schneider Smeltz Ranney & LaFond), where she became a partner.

Jordan serves on several other boards, including the The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Bruening Foundation, City Club of Cleveland, Cleveland Transformation Alliance, PolicyBridge and University Hospitals East Market regional board. She is a leader-in-residence at the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. She is also a member of the Leap of Reason Ambassadors Community, In Counsel with Women and Leadership Cleveland Class of 2003. Among her awards and honors, she was named a Crain's Cleveland Business Woman of Note, YWCA Woman of Achievement, Smart Business Smart 50 leader in Northeast Ohio, Nortech's Innovative Leader of the Year and an EY Entrepreneur of the Year finalist, and received the Ohio Glass Ceiling Award from Ohio Diversity Council.

A Cleveland native, Jordan holds a Juris Doctor and Master of Business Administration from The Ohio State University and a Bachelor of Science from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

*This is a developing story.*