

ARTS ADVOCATE HENNINGER DIES AT 65

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Sara-Beth O'Connor, *Midland Daily News*

Bill Henninger, the President and CEO of the Center for the Arts (MCFTA) died Thursday night at the age of 65 of a heart attack.

“Bill was one of the brightest, kindest, passionate, ethical people I’ve ever met in my life,” Tim Nash, a friend and co-board member for MCFTA, said. “It’s sad to see a champion of the arts die so suddenly and early in life.”

Henninger began working with MCFTA when it first opened in 1972 as the first bassoonist with the symphony and was its first manager.

Henninger was a former 30-year Dow Corning executive. He retired in 2002 after being the global director of human resources for the Specialty Chemical and New Ventures Businesses. His wife, Jackie, is a professional harpist and music teacher. They have two children, Matt and Dana.

Henninger became the Center’s president in 2007.

“During difficult economic times, he was a leader and manager and helped the board make difficult decisions,” Nash said. “What I have enjoyed was the commitment he had to the Center for the Arts.”

Co-board member Mike Hayes said Henninger was a “man of many talents.”

“He was a personal friend and professional colleague who always had a sense for the arts in a place in the world we live in today; with the changing audiences he was able to bring the arts together to make MCFTA a successful place,” Hayes said.

Henninger helped make structural changes in the Center.

“He’s been a great leader in a time of transition,” Hayes said. “He really helped the great employees of the MCFTA to feel appreciated and have a vision of what the Center could be. He will be missed; his leadership will be missed.”

Henninger had a “delightful and unique sense of humor.” He loved his family and loved the arts.

“He had a passion for people, the arts and Midland,” Nash said.

Visitation is set for 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. on Wednesday at Ware Smith Funeral Home. The funeral will be at 11 a.m. on Thursday at First United Methodist Church with a lunch to follow.