

Joan Weill to step down as head of Alvin Ailey board

By Theresa Agovino | October 1, 2014

Ms. Weill has been chairman of the dance company since 2000.



Joan Weill, pictured with Robert Battle and Bennett Rink, will retire as chairman of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation Inc.'s board. *Photo: Paul Kolnik*

Joan H. Weill, a driving force at Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation Inc., will retire as chairman of its board at the end of the year, the dance company announced Wednesday. Ms. Weill, 80, has been on the board since 1994 and its chairman since 2000. The company's headquarters on Ninth Avenue and West 55th Street is also named after her.

A highlight of Ms. Weill's tenure came in 2005 when the Joan Weill Center for Dance opened, creating a permanent home for the dance company and also allowing it to introduce the Ailey Extension—a wildly popular program of dance and fitness classes that are open to all. The classes have created a new revenue stream for the dance company.

"The institutions you support are like your children. You have to know when to step back and let them be independent of you," said Ms. Weill in a statement. She will become chairman emerita after she steps down. Ms. Weill added that Ailey will always be a huge part of her life but that "this is a good time for fresh leadership."

In 2002, Ms. Weill received the National Medal of the Arts for her work at Alvin Ailey, as did Judith Jamison, the dance company's artistic director at the time. It was the first time a dance organization received the award.

Ms. Weill is married to former Citigroup leader [Sandy Weill](#), and both have been very active philanthropists. Ms. Weill is co-chair of the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall and also an honorary board member and president emeritus of Citymeals-On-Wheels. Mr. Weill's many activities include chairing the board of overseers at Weill Cornell Medical College. The pair were recipients of the 2009 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy Award in 2009.

Ms. Weill's retirement was anticipated. Sources have said that the Weills were looking to pare back on their commitments in New York City to spend more time at the California home they purchased a few years ago.

"I have worked alongside Joan for the past two decades, seeing firsthand how she has been an inspiring leader," said Bennett Rink, executive director of Alvin Ailey, in a statement. "With an inimitable combination of warm wisdom, grace and hands-on commitment, she has strengthened and improved every single aspect of what we do."

Ms. Weill will be honored at Ailey's opening night gala on Dec. 3.

"We hope our gala will express even a tenth of the gratitude we feel for her," said Alvin Ailey's artistic director, Robert Battle, in a statement.