



Roger Tory Peterson Institute
Chief Executive Officer
April 2025



About the Roger Tory Peterson Institute

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute (RTPI) is located in Jamestown, NY, where Roger Tory Peterson was born and raised. For 40 years, RTPI has provided a diversity of research, educational, and cultural programs. In 2021, the organization adopted a new strategic plan that places RTPI among an emerging ecosystem of museums, academic institutions, and artists' collectives that focus on the nexus between art and nature. As a nature art museum and home to the largest collection of Peterson's work, RTPI presents a year-round season of exhibitions and programs of Art that Matters to the Planet.

Mission

To foster an appreciation for nature through exhibitions of Art that Matters to the Planet.

Vision

Through exhibitions and programs, the Roger Tory Peterson Institute will be an epicenter for harnessing the power of art to illuminate the beauty of nature, to raise awareness of the critical environmental challenges of our time, and to inspire preservation of the earth's diversity of life.

Home to the largest collection of Roger Tory Peterson's original artwork and related archival materials, RTPI will nurture the next generation of nature artists through exhibitions and artist residencies.

As a living embodiment of the Peterson Field Guide, RTPI will serve as a gateway to the best birding and natural areas throughout Western New York.

RTPI will be a leader for driving tourism to Jamestown and Chautauqua County. RTPI will provide enrichment, sanctuary, and most of all hope for all who visit.

RTPI will be a model of nonprofit sustainability.

Exhibitions

Currently, RTPI curates several exhibitions each year, anchored by its signature exhibition, *Art that Matters to the Planet*. Each year, this juried exhibition takes its theme from one of the Peterson Field Guides or other Peterson works. For instance, *Art that Matters to the Planet: Interconnectivity* featured works by contemporary artists from throughout the United States in response to a call anchored by Peterson's Field Guide to trees, as well as emerging science that helps us better understand how intimately trees are connected by vast, underground networks of roots.

To complement its main floor exhibitions, RTPI hosts simultaneous exhibitions of work by former RTPI artists-in-residence, as well as participants in the annual RTPI Plein Air Festival. The Anderson Gallery, located on the main floor, provides RTPI the opportunity to draw from its collection to introduce visitors to the diversity of Peterson's work, and also to thematically set the stage for main floor exhibitions.

The Peterson Collection

RTPI is home to the largest collection of Peterson's original artworks, films and slides, personal effects, and other archival materials. To explore the collection is to join him as he traveled the world in search of birds and other fauna and flora to paint, photograph, film, and in many instances, protect. At RTPI, our job is to steward this unique, world-class collection, to make it accessible to scholars and researchers, and to share it as broadly and creatively as we can with artists, conservationists and lovers of nature all over the world.

Programs

RTPI offers a range of rotating programs that blend art, nature, and education to honor Peterson's legacy. Signature events include Art After 5, Yoga with the Birds, the Banff Film Festival, Summer Soiree, RTPI Bluebird Festival, Roger's Bird-Day Bash, the RTPI Plein Air Festival, and Holidays at the Lodge.

Other initiatives include rotating exhibitions focused on environmental themes, guided birding walks, art and conservation workshops, and interactive school and youth group field trips.

The Peterson Preserve

The Lodge at RTPI is nested within a 27-acre nature preserve of wildflower gardens, pollinator meadows, and mature stands of hemlock trees. The Peterson Preserve is a sanctuary for visitors. A refuge for wildlife. A learning laboratory for us all.

Artist-in-Residence Program

Roger Tory Peterson was the very first "scholar-in-residence" at Fallingwater, Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural masterpiece, located in Mill Run, PA. During his residency, he completed the artwork for his *Field Guide to Mexican Birds*. With our Artist-in-Residence program, RTPI aspires to follow in Peterson's footsteps by nurturing the next generation of nature artists that create Art that Matters to the Planet.

About the CEO

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute seeks a Chief Executive Officer that will build upon recent gains in realizing RTPI's potential as a nature art museum of local, regional, and national significance.

The next CEO will be a charismatic and diplomatic leader who will bring strong managerial skills to the business of running a museum. They will embrace the opportunity to expand the number of visitors, members, donors, community partners, and corporate sponsors. They will bring an entrepreneurial mindset to increasing earned revenue through exhibitions, programs, signature special events, and facility rentals.

They will be tasked with raising the visibility RTPI locally, regionally, and nationally as a passionate spokesperson for the relevancy of Peterson's living legacy of Art that Matters to the Planet.

The CEO has delegated authority from the Board of Directors to conduct the day-to-day operations of the museum in alignment with the goals and objectives of the approved strategic plan. The CEO reports to an engaged, 17-member Board of Directors and manages a professional team of nine full-time staff and several contractual support staff.

Core Responsibilities

The next CEO of RTPI will bring a balanced approach as both a visionary and operational executive. They should lead by example. They should have the capacity for organized, focused work; clear and effective communications; an ability to manage multiple projects under deadline; and the flexibility to adapt to changing situations and opportunities. Specific areas of responsibility include:

Strategy, Leadership and Governance

- Guide the evolution and implementation of RTPI's overall strategic vision in collaboration with the Board of Directors, staff and community stakeholders.
- Inspire and lead a talented, passionate, and dedicated team. Foster a transparent, collaborative, and inclusive culture aligned with RTPI's mission and vision.
- Exhibit leadership in the local community through civic engagement, visibility and representation of the museum.
- Enrich RTPI's local reputation as a treasured community gathering space, its regional reputation as a cultural destination and its national reputation as leader in the nature art ecosystem.
- With input and guidance from the Nominating and Governance Committee:
 - Build the capacity of the Board to ensure good governance; to maintain up-to-date bylaws, policies and procedures.

Administration and Finance

- With input and guidance from the Administration and Finance Committee:
 - Manage and develop a team of museum professionals with the skills and expertise to administer programs with an exceptional degree of creativity, professionalism, and sustainability.
 - Maintain best practices in human resources management, including hiring, onboarding, professional development, reporting, policies, benefits administration, and performance review.
 - Facilitate and support internal communications among staff to foster productive working relationships and a high degree of coordination and collaboration among the team.
 - Manage the organization's finances in compliance with applicable rules and regulations, and in accordance with nonprofit and museum standards and best practices; maintain sound financial systems, bookkeeping and

accounting procedures, internal controls; comply with annual audit and tax filing requirements; prepare and administer the annual budget; monitor annual income and expenses; manage the general oversight of the endowment and investment portfolios.

- Optimize technology to support cross-departmental collaboration, document retention, program management, reporting, and evaluation.
- Continue to work toward RTPI's accreditation with the American Alliance of Museums.
- Maintain a strong, working relationship with Jamestown Community College to steward the museum building and nature preserve.

Development

- With input and guidance from the Development and Communications Committee:
 - Supervise the development of a long-term fundraising strategy, including planned giving and earned income, in collaboration with the Development Director; supervise the development and implementation of annual fundraising plans, including planned giving, by the Development Director; supervise the development and implementation of annual earned income plans by the Programs and Events Manager and other staff.
 - Support fundraising objectives by cultivating and maintaining relationships with individual, corporate, and institutional funders; serve, as strategically determined, as the primary solicitor for support from major institutional, corporate, and individual donors.

Communications and External Relations

- With input from the Development and Communications Committee:
 - Guide the evolution of RTPI's institutional voice for local, regional, and national audiences; guide the development and implementation of annual communications plans.
 - Serve as the primary spokesperson during and outside working hours, effectively representing RTPI at external engagements and events to enhance the organization's profile among civic organizations, key partners, donors, government and elected officials, education leaders, and the media.
 - Actively engage with the local community, building relationships and seeking collaborative opportunities with other institutions and organizations to elevate Jamestown and its cultural assets.

Collections and Exhibitions

- With input and guidance from the Collections and Exhibitions Committee:
 - Supervise the development of a long-term exhibitions strategy in collaboration with the Curator; supervise the development and implementation of annual exhibitions plans by the Curator.
 - Supervise the development of a robust annual season of exhibition programs in collaboration with the Curator and Programs and Events Manager.

- Supervise the development of a long-term collections strategy in collaboration with the Curator; supervise the development and implementation of annual collections plans by the Curator.

Experience, Skill Set, and Core Competencies

The CEO position represents a challenging and rewarding opportunity that calls for a diverse set of skills and experiences. The Board is seeking qualified candidates who can lead the organization with enthusiasm, vision, skill, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit. The following areas are considered priorities:

- A curiosity for realizing the potential of the unique assets of RTPI, including the building, the collection and the singular legacy of Peterson himself; passion for making the compelling case for the relevance of Peterson and RTPI today and into the future.
- A successful record of setting the vision for, managing, and implementing strategies that scale programs, initiatives, or organizations to a new phase of growth.
- Fundraising expertise with a demonstrated track record of cultivating long-term relationships, securing major gifts and elevating an organization's brand.
- A collaborative and visionary management style, fostering innovation while ensuring alignment with an institution's core mission.
- An open communication style, that empowers team and stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to long-term strategic goals.
- Demonstrated success working effectively with a Board of Directors, including engaging them in fundraising opportunities, participating in board recruitment, and orienting them to RTPI's unique culture, programs, and constituent communities.
- A proven track record stewarding community relationships: aptitude and appetite for active participation in civic organizations, particularly those focused on tourism, cultural advancement, municipal advocacy, and small business development.
- Business acumen, including a working understanding of contract negotiations, IT and finance systems, budgeting, marketing, governance, and HR.
- A keen understanding of the importance of local, regional, and national recognition, with the ability to balance and leverage all three to advance an institution's mission and visibility.
- An entrepreneurial mindset, strategic creativity, and a proactive, hands-on work ethic, with a willingness to engage directly in operational and organizational efforts as needed.
- A bachelor's degree required, master's degree in museum studies or related fields ideal.
- A knowledge of and passion for the natural world and the mission of RTIP, which is shared with team, Board and community.
- A skilled administrator with 10 or more years of progressive leadership experience; experience in nonprofit museums ideal; experience with smaller-scale nonprofits encouraged.

Nominations and Applications: Nominations and applications, including resume and cover letter, should be directed to Courtney Disston at: cdisston@disstonsearch.com.

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute is an Equal Opportunity employer and provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, creed, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, sex, or gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, and pregnancy-related conditions), gender identity or expression, (including transgender status), sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, genetic information, service in the military, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances.

About Disston Search:

Headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, Disston Search is a retained executive search firm committed to partnering with education, non-profit, and mission driven organizations to identify and recruit key leaders. Disston Search works across the non-profit sector in all major functional areas with a focus on organizational culture and diversity.