

Board Elects New Members/Officers

Sharon McKone, Marketing/Communications Consultant

The Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center Board of Directors is pleased to announce the election of seven new board members. We greatly appreciate their willingness to give their time in support of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge.

The board has also selected a new slate of officers: Pete McKone will serve as president, Linda Christie as president-elect, Lynda Gearheart as past-president, Will Rodgers as treasurer, and Ellen Browning as secretary.

Meet our new board members:

Christie Eckler is a certified fundraising professional. She has more than 20 years of nonprofit experience and has raised more than \$20 million in the past decade. Currently, she is vice president for advancement for the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) and was an integral part of the leadership transition as BRIT prepared to manage the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Christie is keenly interested in organizations with missions that align nature conservation and education. She has served on numerous nonprofit boards, committees, and taskforces. She is also active in a number of professional organizations such as Women Steering Business, Women's Policy Forum, and Fort Worth Rotary Club.

Michael Fouraker is the executive director of the nationally acclaimed Fort Worth Zoo. An avid hunter, fisherman, and outdoorsman, he has been part of the zoo since 1993. With more than 30 years of experience in animal, exhibitory, and zoo management, he has focused on building partnerships that support global conservation initiatives, becoming the founder, president, and board member of the International Elephant Foundation; founding board member of the International Iguana Foundation; and board member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, International Rhino Foundation, Caribbean Wildlife Alliance, and Turtle Survival Alliance.

Joanna Gant is the business manager at Hill School in Fort Worth. Hill School is a private school that provides progressive educational services for bright, motivated students who learn differently. She has spent 12 years in corporate accounting and six in nonprofit accounting. She previously served as accounting manager with TPG Capital, a global investment firm, and as a staff accountant with Univision Communications, Inc. Joanna is an ex-officio member of the Hill School Board of Trustees and serves on the school's finance and human resources committees.

Bob O'Kennon is well-known to Friends members, having served on the Friends board and shared his vast knowledge of plants during our popular members event, Bagels & Botany with Bob. He is currently the resident research associate at BRIT. A veteran worldwide field researcher, Bob is co-author of the *Shinners and Mahler's Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*; *Flora and Natural History of Gillespie County, Texas*; and the upcoming *Illustrated Flora of East Texas* and field guide to the hawthorns (*Crataegus*, Rosaceae)



of the world. He has served on the board of directors of BRIT, the Natural Area Preservation Association, Native Prairie Association of Texas, Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge, Dallas Nature Center, and Useful Wild Plants of Texas project.

Mary Margaret Richter is a lifelong outdoorsperson and lover of nature—and the Fort Worth Nature Center, in particular, is close to her heart, having spent much of her life on the Edwards Ranch next to the Refuge raising horses and ranching. She has served on the board of directors of the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo for the past 10 years. In addition, she has served on the executive committee of Windy Ryon Memorial Roping and as committee co-chair of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame Young Guns.

Robin Sanders' people skills and organizational abilities have served her well in her chosen field. As a travel advisor who founded a luxury travel agency—Sanders Travel Centre in Fort Worth—most of her career has centered on leisure and adventure travel and exploration of unique destinations such as Rwanda, Uganda, Mongolia, and Bhutan. Because of her experiences, her focus has always been her continuing education for protected lands. Her community service includes serving on the board of the Young Women's Leadership Academy; community board for Planned Parenthood; numerous boards in the travel industry such as Virtuoso, Rosewood Hotels, Intercontinental Hotels, and JG Black Book Travel Network; and board of Jewel Charity.

Laura Wood is very passionate about the Nature Center and has worked in the field of conservation her entire career. In previous work with the Friends, she helped merge two non-profits, liaised with the City of Fort Worth, created and launched development and communications strategies, managed and executed major events, performed grant and donor relationship management, and helped build a board of directors. In addition, she is a court-appointed special advocate (CASA), past president and current board member of Lena Pope, Inc., and past secretary and board member of the Texas Land Trust Council.