

Marybeth Gardam

Activist Biography

I attended Seton Hall University in South Orange NJ where I earned a BA in Communications in 1973. I worked professionally in advertising, marketing, fundraising and non-profit leadership over the course of my career from the 1970s through the 1990s. I've been a peace and justice volunteer and organizer since the 1980s.

During the 1970s, in my native New Jersey, I worked as a copywriter and account manager for clients like the NJ Ballet Company, the NJ Shakespeare Company at Drew University, Brooklyn Academy of Music, plus a bunch of manufacturing, banking and retail clients. I've had to hire and fire mall Santa Clauses and deal with demanding clients. I faced a lot of the kinds of misogyny and objectifying women that you've all seen on the tv show Madmen, and I resolved to get out of Advertising. But I brought my advertising and marketing skills to a non-profit world.

I signed on to work as Development Director and Community Relations Spokesperson for a small non-profit hospital (**Freehold Hospital**) in Monmouth County NJ. It's now a large regional medical center but back then it was struggling. I raised grant money from the Kresge Foundation (for a new ICU) and from the Prudential Foundation (for a new Hospice program) as well as handling annual giving programs, special events and major donors. I planned and coordinated volunteers to run an annual golf outing and a charity ball, both of which raised thousands of dollars. Though it was a small hospital it was in the NY Metro area and I faced a lot of challenges repairing some major PR gaffes and glitches from before my time.

Subsequently I got a taste of corporate culture when I worked doing marketing for **Bell Labs**, then **Bell Communications Research** as a long-term contract employee. In 1984 my husband's job moved to Macon, Georgia, where I found it hard to get an advertising job and we started a family. We attended the Black Catholic church, **St. Peter Claver**, and our daughter was one of about 10 white students in the parochial school there. I was hired part time to raise money for the school building campaign, reporting to the Parish Council. Afterwards I was offered a job as director of the **Central Georgia Center for Peace**, where we did educational forums and organized protests with the group Central Georgians for Central Americans.

It was during the 80s, before our daughter was born that I met a Catholic sister who was working with migrant farmworkers in Georgia, a mostly invisible population. She and I created a non-profit entity called **People Of The Road Coalition**, organizing all the faith leaders and social workers who were already working with migrants, though the State denied there were any there. We obtained a government grant to fund the project and pay for a 2nd migrant health clinic in the state. I also worked as a volunteer fundraiser for the Georgia Children's Home during that decade. During the 90s I was dealing with some health issues and raising a new baby as an "older" mom.

In 2000 we moved to Iowa and I have to admit I was looking forward to NOT working on peace and justice for a while. I had signed up for writing courses at University of Iowa. But following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 I was pulled back into peace work and co-founded **Women For Peace**

in Cedar Rapids IA with 6 Christian women and 6 Muslim women, and with the support and encouragement of the Franciscan sisters and the Mercy Sisters. Within the first year we had recruited 200 women who were actively protesting the coming war, standing on street corners with signs in all kinds of weather and hosting speakers, peace walks and educational forums.

When I joined WILPF in 2003 at the branch level I participated in the Corporate Study Course and became deeply involved in promoting that course in Des Moines. Eventually I became co-President of the **Des Moines branch** for 3 years. During that time I served as a founding Steering Committee member for Move To Amend, and started two **Move To Amend** Affiliates and planted the seeds for two more. When we moved from Des Moines in 2012, I was tapped to be more active at the national level, and served as **Co-Chair of the Corporations VS Democracy Committee** for 2 years. Eventually the other two co-chairs retired and I was left to chair the committee alone, though I have asked repeatedly for others to relieve me and lead the committee. I do the best I can and have seen the committee through a major transformation into the **Women, Money & Democracy Committee** where our members conduct an annual planning retreat to gain input into the work plan for the 2-3 years ahead.

Since 2014 I served in some capacity as part of WILPF's Development Committee, eventually becoming the Development Chair, and then Interim Chair. I have stayed involved on the Development Committee, even when I was not chair. From 2014 through 2021 I performed all the fundraising duties that would normally have been the responsibility of staff, donating my time and expertise.

During this time WILPF US faced some tough times and internal conflicts. In an attempt to unify our organization, I devoted 7 years to planning and facilitating monthly (then quarterly in 2023) **One WILPF Calls/Zooms** to help plan Solidarity actions across the country and raise our visibility.

I've been working for peace and justice since the 1980s. Since 2003 WILPF US has been my faith-based community where I met some of my most trusted and like-minded women friends. I've been married for 42 years and my husband has kept bail money on hand for the last 20 years, though so far I have not been arrested. We have one daughter who now lives 2 miles away, and a nearly 5 year old grandson who is the light in our lives. In running for this office I know I will have to be sacrificing family time, which I regard as precious.

Responses to Questions on Application

1. WILPF US is a mission-driven membership organization. What does that mean to you?

I believe that members should have the opportunity to voice their opinions, but that the weight given to those opinions should be valued against their level of experience and their willingness to contribute in various ways to the long-term sustainability and programmatic success of the organization. Leaders need to be responsible for developing strategies and members should be asked to support those strategies.

2. Please describe your involvement in WILPF, including a brief summary of work at the level of branch, national, and/or international:

When I joined WILPF in 2003 at the branch level I participated in the Corporate Study Course and became deeply involved in promoting that course in Des Moines. Eventually I became co-President of the Des Moines branch for 3 years. When we moved from Des Moines in 2012 I was tapped to be more active at the national level, and served as Co-Chair of the Corporations VS Democracy Committee for 2 years. Eventually the other two co-chairs retired and I was left to chair the committee alone, though I have asked repeatedly for others to relieve me and lead the committee. I do the best I can and have seen the committee through a major transformation into the Women, Money & Democracy Committee where our members conduct an annual planning retreat to gain input into the work plan for the 2-3 years ahead. Since 2014 I served in some capacity as part of WILPF's Development Committee, eventually becoming the Development Chair, and then Interim Chair. I have stayed involved on the Development Committee, even when I was not chair. From 2014 through 2021 I performed all the fundraising duties that would normally have been the responsibility of staff, donating my time and expertise.

3. Why are you interested in filling this position?

This is a particularly difficult position to fill, since so few people will accept the responsibility for meeting a dollar goal for WILPF. Martha Collins has been Interim Chair and will only consider running again if she can get some support from me, because she works full time and the demands on Board Members are significant. I believe Development needs to have a voice on the WILPF Board. I would prefer someone else step forward, but I'm willing to assist Martha so she remains in place.

4. Please describe your other non-WILPF work or involvement that you believe helps qualify you for this position:

I worked professionally in advertising, marketing, fundraising and non-profit leadership over the course of my career from the 1970s through the 1990s. During the 1970s, in New Jersey, I raised grant money from the Kresge Foundation (for a new ICU) and from the Prudential Foundation (for a new Hospice program) for the non-profit community hospital where I worked as Development Director and Community Relations Spokesperson. I worked also in marketing for Bell Labs, then Bell Communications Research in New Jersey. In the 1990s I served as fundraiser for our church's building campaign in Georgia, director of the Central Georgia Peace Center and I created a non-profit entity called People Of The Road Coalition, to serve the

invisible population of migrant farmworkers in Georgia and obtained a government grant to fund the project. I also worked as a volunteer fundraiser for the Georgia Children's Home during that decade. In 2000 we moved to Iowa and following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and co-founded Women For Peace in Cedar Rapids IA. Within the first year we had recruited 200 women who were actively protesting the coming war, standing on street corners with signs in all kinds of weather and hosting speakers, peace walks and educational forums. I've been working for peace and justice since the 1980s.

5. What skills can you offer in this position?

Expertise in writing, grant writing, some graphic design, Canva software, word processing, marketing and fundraising.

Letters of Recommendation

Dear Nominating Committee,

I am happy to nominate Marybeth Gardam to serve as Co-Chair for Development at WILPF US during the upcoming board elections.

Marybeth has served as Development Chair before and knows the demands of the task, and she would be working with Martha Collins to share the workload. Importantly, both these women have extensive professional fundraising and non-profit leadership experience. As Convener of the Earth Democracy Committee, I've worked with Marybeth in her role as Chair of the Women, Money & Democracy Committee. She has always been collaborative, generous with her time and easy to work with. She is reliable and when she says she will do something she does it.

Warm regards,

Nancy Price
Chair, Earth Democracy Committee,
2024 Congress Program Chair
WILPF US Development Committee Member
International WILPF Environmental Working Group Member

Dear WILPF Nomination Committee,

It's my pleasure to highly recommend an esteemed women rights activist, MaryBeth Gardam, for the role of WILPF Development Committee Co-Chair. I've known MaryBeth for several years, and I can attest to her strength of character, compassion for others, and most importantly, her significant ability to build team.

Clearly MaryBeth has proven experience in fund development from her previous years of experience in the role of Development Committee Chair, but what I always find truly inspiring about her is that she is at the table – advocating – with board members, branch members, and other key stakeholders for the success of WILPF.

I first met MaryBeth during one of the One WILPF membership forum where she was just beginning in this new leadership role. She eloquently highlighted the presenter's key issues of disparities and challenges experienced by women and their families across the country. MaryBeth didn't just coordinate and facilitate the meeting, she was engaged and participated in the discussion. She was very articulate and stated the economic issues that women experience – she highlighted easy, doable first steps to remedy many of these circumstances. She offered solutions! By the end of the forum, I knew I wanted to stay engaged with WILPF and join the Women, Money & Democracy issue committee to meet and talk her ear off on ways WILPF could help advance more at the local branch levels.

MaryBeth truly embodies the mantra of "if you see a need, take the lead."

In my current roles as Interim Development Committee Chair for WILPF, I value and count on MaryBeth's guidance and ability to forge partnerships and trust within WILPF. She understands how to make a mission, everyone's. This inclusive thinking makes others rethink and recommit. That's a leader.

In the coming year, WILPF has aggressive fundraising goals; this is a testament to MaryBeth's hard work and commitment to success and longevity of the organization. To achieve and sustain these goals, I would highly recommend MaryBeth Gardam as the WILPF Development Committee Co-chair to help lead the fundraising efforts for the organization moving forward.

Sincerely,

Martha Collins
Interim WILPF Development Committee Chair (2023)

Candidate's Statement

I am running for Co-Chair of the Development Committee of WILPF US because I feel I have the experience to make a difference. My background and work experience allows me to bring a unique set of skills to WILPF, and my prior role as Development Committee Chair informs the work that lies ahead.

I would not attempt to do this job unless a Co-Chair was able to serve, and I am delighted to be working as Co-Chair with my trusted friend Martha Collins who is a reliable and committed WILPF member, an experienced fundraiser and non-profit leader, and a person of rational integrity.

If elected I promise to help Martha oversee WILPF's fundraising staff and annual giving program (2 mailed appeals a year plus online giving asks, grant application processes, bequests, major gifts and new donor lead development). This is a lot of work, even without the hours of team meetings, board, finance and steering committee meetings. Development is the only really measurable area of WILPF where success or failure is immediately quantifiable. No wonder it is such a difficult board position to fill.

My position on fundraising at WILPF is that it is everyone's job, not just the staff and Development Committee. We have neglected fundraising as a committed part of our strategic planning for far too long. It is going to take a significant investment to build relationships with new qualified donors, donor lead research, and consistent efforts that will probably not pay off in the short term, but which will help raise our visibility and long term sustainability.