

Gayle Watkins, PhD (Andy Chmar)

Highlands, NC

Gayle began coming to Highlands in the mid-1970s, while dating Andy. Throughout their Army careers, they came regularly to visit Andy's parents, Jan and Paul, and other family members. In 2016, Gayle and Andy were finally able to move to Highlands full time.

Prior to settling in Highlands, Gayle served 22 years in the Army, with assignments in logistics and education. She was an Associate Professor (Leadership) and an Associate Dean at West Point, the US Military Academy. Following her retirement from the military, Gayle worked with Beatrix Research and Consulting, conducting qualitative research for a wide array of clients from the military to the pharmaceutical industry.

In 2012, Gayle founded Avidog International, an online university providing educational programs for dog breeders around the world. Avidog taught various sciences to breeders, including genetics, nutrition, canine development & behavior, and reproduction. Avidog was acquired by Good Dog, Inc in 2022 and Gayle happily retired to work in her garden and play with her dogs.

Gayle has a BA (biology) from Gettysburg College, an MBA from Harvard University, an MA (National Strategic Studies) from the Naval War College, and an MA and PhD (Sociology) from Stanford University.

Gayle served on the board of the Baker Institute at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine as well as the boards of numerous dog clubs across the country. She is currently a member of the Western Carolina University (WCU) Foundation Board, co-chair of the Brinson Honors College Advisory Board at WCU, and President of Canine Health Events, a non-profit supporting research in dog health issues.



Keller Torrey (Sam)

St Simons Island, GA & Highlands, NC

A Georgia native, Keller grew up in Columbus, GA, attended Agnes Scott College in Decatur, GA, lived 5 years in Savannah, GA, 38 years in Roswell, GA and has recently moved to St Simons Island, GA. She and husband Sam have owned a home in Highlands since 1994.

Keller holds a BA in mathematics, is a 1993 member of Leadership Georgia and a former private pilot. She spent 20 years at BellSouth Corporation in Regulatory and External Affairs, ran a small business and then worked in non-profit development for 10 years.

A lifelong volunteer, Keller has served on a variety of boards including the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Foundation, STAR House Foundation, North Fulton Community Charities, The Horizon Theatre, and the Chattahoochee Nature Center.

In 1978, the Torrey family sold Ossabaw Island, a 26,000 acre barrier island south of Savannah, to the State of Georgia to ensure it would be preserved and protected. Ossabaw is Georgia's first designated Heritage Preserve.

In Highlands, Keller has served on the board of the International Friendship Center with emphasis on expanding the Highlands Food Pantry and currently serves on the Vestry of the Church of the Incarnation. She and Sam have hosted Half-Shell for several years and attend the Soiree annually. She is interested in gardening and grand parenting.



Robert Strickland (Marianne)

Highlands, NC

Professional

Bob currently works for an independent investment advisory firm, Shaffer Wealth Management, Hightower Advisors. He has worked for over 16 years in the financial services industry including 11 years at SunTrust Bank as a Vice-President in their Private Wealth Division. Before pursuing a career in the financial services industry, Bob worked for The Coca-Cola Company for 16 years in both the international and US markets, living in South America for 10 years and travelling the Far East for 2 years.

Education

Bob graduated undergraduate from Terry Business School at the University of Georgia and studied International Business at Niyenrode Business Universiteit in the Netherlands. He received a master's degree in international finance from The Thunderbird School of Global Management. He currently holds the Certified Exit Planner Advisor (CEPA) designation with FINRA Series 7 and Series 66 designations.

Past Community Involvement

- Board Positions: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Atlanta, Arthritis Foundation, Georgia Chapter, Northside United Methodist Church, Finance Committee Chair, Church Council, and Horizon Theatre.
- Committee Positions: Woodruff Arts Center Advanced Gifts Committee, W&L Steering Committee and Parent Fund Chairs



Interest in Highlands Biological Foundation

I have always enjoyed being out in nature, greatly appreciating its beauty and wildlife. As a Boy Scout and Explorer Scout, I grew up active in the outdoors - hiking, camping, canoeing, spelunking and rappelling in several Regional National Parks', forests, caves and rivers. Scouting is a great experience and brought me closer to nature. I learned the importance of conservation of our most prized resource, the land and its wildlife.

Both Marianne and I enjoy being out in nature. While living in South America we participated in eco-excursions, including to the Galapagos islands, the Amazon Rio Napo rain forest, Cotopaxi National Park, and Torre del Paine, a UNESCO designated biosphere. On a recent trip to Palm Springs, we hiked several parks in the Coachella Valley and visited Joshua Tree National Park.

Living in Highlands, we enjoy hiking in the nearby mountains and enjoy the beauty of Northwestern North Carolinas' native flora and fauna. As our interest and knowledge in nature grows so does our support for HBF and their commitment to preserving and protecting the special environment in the Southern Appalachians through research and education.

Lori Heys (Ed)

Highlands, NC

Lori has a B.S. from the University of Florida in accounting. She started her career in public accounting at Deloitte in Atlanta and became a Certified Public Accountant. At Deloitte, she had the opportunity to be a loaned executive with United Way where she found her interest in working with non- profit organizations. She worked for Coxe Curry in Fundraising Consulting. Most recently, she served on the board of the Atlanta Memorial Park Conservancy.

Since the first home Ed and Lori purchased in Highlands in 2016, they have grown in their community involvement where they are members of First Presbyterian Church of Highlands. Ed is also on the board of the Highlands-Cashiers Health Foundation. They are members of Highlands Country Club and Mountain Laurel Tennis Club. Since, November of 2023, they have lived in Highlands full time.

Lori has been helping with the Nature Center gift shop. She enjoys, hiking, tennis, playing bridge and mah jong and working in her dahlia garden. Ed and Lori have two grown children, Caroline (Matt) Zornik and Taylor (Caroline) Heys. They have one grandchild, Henry.



Leslie Manning

Highlands, NC

Leslie Manning has served nonprofits as well as consulted for various organizations of all sizes since the early 2000's. Always fascinated by people and systems; she began her work studying sociology at Auburn University. She served as the Executive Director of [a nonprofit](#) in Alabama (still near and dear to her heart) for almost ten years.

Since moving to Highlands in January 2018, Leslie has consulted with nonprofits all over the country. One consulting gig turned into a staff position when she took on the role of the first Executive Director of the Counseling Center of Highlands. More recently, she was hired to be the Regional Development Officer for Pisgah Legal Services, covering Macon, Jackson and Haywood counties.

Leslie is a member of the Rotary Club of Highlands and a member of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation. Leslie loves to volunteer with her daughters' school, Rabun Gap Nacoochee School, and as a soccer coach for Macon County Rec Department. When Leslie is not working or herding her brood, she enjoys hiking, gardening, and writing poetry.



Bill Bush (Bruce McAlpin)

Pensacola, FL and Highlands, NC

Bill is originally from Columbus, GA. He attended the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (B.A. Political Science 1982, Phi Beta Kappa) and the University of Georgia School of Law (J.D. 1985, Law Review and Order of the Coif). After graduating from law school, Bill joined the Atlanta office of King & Spalding working as an associate in the firm's real estate section.

In 1990, Bill began working for the next 31 years as an attorney at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Atlanta. At EPA, Bill represented the United States in administrative and judicial litigation involving the enforcement of various environmental statutes. He began his career addressing violations of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) which provides a regulatory framework for the management of hazardous waste from "cradle to grave". Bill then worked to enforce the statute known as "Superfund" which allows the government to address uncontrolled sites contaminated with hazardous substances by ordering responsible parties to perform cleanups or suing responsible parties for the reimbursement of government-led cleanups.

Bill spent his last 15-plus years at EPA primarily enforcing violations of the Clean Water Act associated with discharges from municipal sewer systems. He was the lead EPA attorney responsible for Clean Water Act settlements with most of the large municipal sewer systems in the Southeast including Atlanta, Birmingham, Louisville, Nashville, and Miami.

After retiring from EPA in 2021, Bill spends his time traveling with his partner of 35 years, Bruce, and settling into their new home in Highlands where he spends most of his time in the yard trying not to kill his new plants. Bill is an avid Dawgs' fan and loves Carolina basketball.



Charles M. Tarver (Susan)

Highlands, NC

Born in Mobile, Alabama, Charley is the 5th of nine children and was reared on the family's farm near Sunflower in Washington County, about 60 miles north of Mobile. He attended Leroy High School in Washington County and graduated from Auburn University in 1968 with a Bachelor of Science degree in forest management. Upon graduation from Auburn, Charley taught high school for a brief period as an emergency teacher in Smith's Station, Alabama while waiting for his enlistment date into the United States Air Force.

Charley served in the Air Force from January 1969 until April 1974. He achieved the rank of Captain and served as an Aircraft Commander in the Strategic Air Command, America's Nuclear Strike Force during the Cold War, where he flew global refueling missions in the KC-135 Stratotanker in support of the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent force, as well as numerous combat missions in support of the Viet Nam war.

Following his military service, Charley, his wife and two children moved to Atlanta, Georgia where Charley, unable to secure a job in commercial aviation or forestry, found employment in the banking field, where he acquired skills in business, credit and finance. While employed at the First National Bank of Atlanta, Charley began investing in timberland for some of the bank's larger investment clients and a few years later left the bank and started a private timberland investment company that later became Forest Investment Associates (FIA), one of the earliest timberland investment companies and one of today's largest TIMOs (timberland investment management organizations), with timberland investments located throughout the United States and abroad. Charley retired from FIA in 2008.

During his business career, Charley was very active in forestry and conservation organizations. He served on the boards of the following organizations: The American Forestry Association, Forest Landowners Association, Georgia Forestry Association, Forest Landowners Tax Council, Forest History Society, The Nature Conservancy, the Longleaf Alliance, the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League and the Advisory Council of the University of Georgia Press.



Charley is a strong supporting alumnus of Auburn University, having served on the Advisory Council for the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. The School named him Outstanding Alumnus in 1992 and

in 1993 the Southeastern Society of American Foresters selected him for the Excellence in Forestry award. Charley was inducted into the Georgia Foresters Hall of Fame in 2007.

In retirement, Charley's passion has been longleaf pine and the restoration of its associated ecosystems. In addition to his work in the Longleaf Alliance, Charley "practices what he preaches" on Longleaf, his quail hunting plantation in Southwest Georgia. He and his wife, Susan, live in Highlands, North Carolina, where Charley practices his hobby of wood turning.