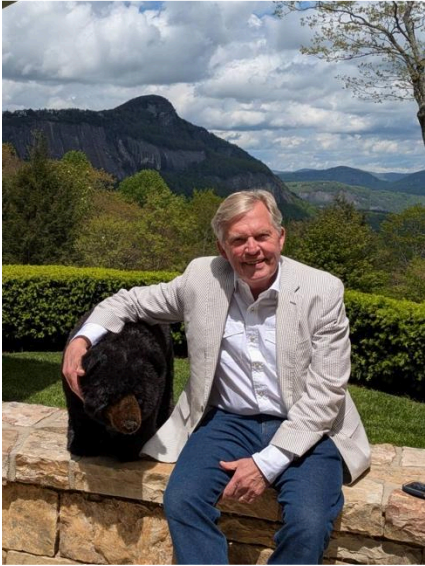


## HBF 2026 Nominees - Board of Trustees



### **Pat Gleeson (Bee)**

Highlands, NC.

Our 12-Year full-time residency here followed 20+ years of renting places in Highlands during Holidays, Friend Gatherings, Hiking, and Fly-Fishing adventures. Any excuse to ascend to Highlands and escape Atlanta was a good one. At one point I looked at Bee and said; “*some chapter of our lives, we gotta live here*”, and we made it!

I moved to Atlanta in 1988 from Minnesota to continue a career in advertising sales. For the next 25 years, that experience included Turner Outdoor Advertising, Adams Outdoor Advertising, KICKS 101.5 Radio, Cap Cities/ABC Radio, Morris Communications, WSB Sports Marketing (Bulldogs-Braves-Hawks Radio Networks), and Comcast (aka Xfinity) Television. Before moving to Highlands for keeps, we both held leadership roles at the Nantahala Outdoor Center from 2013-2015, and we currently have a real estate practice in downtown Highlands where we enjoy helping others do exactly what we did...discover Highlands!

Bee and I met in 1990 (blind date) and married in 1993. Our kids Maggie (43) and Sean (40) live in Seoul, South Korea and Lake Minnetonka, MN respectively. We are blessed with one Granddaughter so far (Ella) and a beautiful Golden Retriever (Lovey).

At age 5, I first started fishing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, and I knew right away that the outdoors was calling my name for life. In my youth I became a Fishing Guide in those same waters (but then I had to get a real job). My 30 years of fly fishing the USA and beyond (mostly in the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau) has only increased my passion for a clean watershed, caring for & sustaining our fragile eco system, and selfishly just taking in the grandeur and beauty of it all, right here in our

backyard. I've been fortunate to put these long-held feelings into practice by being a contributor and "Life Member" of Trout Unlimited and by serving as President of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association for the past 6 years.

In closing, I've always tried to live life by practicing what I call "The 4 F's": Faith, Family, Friends, and Fly Fishing. So far, so good!

Many thanks for considering me to represent the Highlands Biological Foundation as a member of the Board. It would be an honor to join you and get involved.





### **Matt McDonald (Monica)**

#### Buckhead and Highlands

Matt grew up in Roswell, Ga. and attended the University of Georgia for undergrad and Medical College of Georgia for his BS in Physical Therapy (1984). Upon graduation, he started his career at Hughston Sports Medicine Clinic in Columbus, Ga before returning to Atlanta to start his own private practice - Progressive Sports Medicine (PSM). He grew PSM to one of largest private groups in Ga before selling to a public company. He then became CEO of an Atlanta orthopedic group prior to building Therapy Management Solution (TMS), a contracting/consulting management company. Matt retired at the end of 2025 after 10+ years with Peachtree Orthopedics in Atlanta as the Director of Rehabilitation as well as Occupational Medicine.

Matt and Monica began visiting Highlands in the mid 1990's. Built their first home in 2001 and are currently renovating a 1919 cottage (which has been a never-ending process). Past community involvement includes United Way, Atlanta Mission, Atlanta Food Bank and past president of Collier Commons Community and Turtle Creek Properties.

His Highlands involvement has recently begun with helping in some of the Greenway project initiatives and he looks forward to getting more involved in the community once the house is complete and able to spend more time in Highlands.

Hobbies include anything outdoors; golf, cycling, hiking and gardening. Monica and Matt have been married 33 years.



### **Frederick Halback (Annemarie)**

Highlands, NC

The Halback's have owned a home at Wildcat Cliffs Country Club since 2016 and have enjoyed living here full-time for the last five years. Having grown-up in Orlando they are blessed with two grown sons and a daughter-in-law.

Fred has a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Florida. Starting a planning, design, and management practice in Orlando in 1978, the firm specialized in public work throughout the Southeast and resort/entertainment work primarily for the Walt Disney Company. The firm moved to St. Augustine in 2001, and re-branded as Marquis LaFmer + Halback, Inc. specializing in historic and cultural projects, telling stories of the land and its people. Fred also taught at the University of Florida for ten years. He has received numerous planning and design awards, including two projects that were honored in White House ceremonies conducted by the first lady. Fred was inducted as a fellow, in the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1996, for executed works.

Previous community and service involvement includes serving on the Orlando Boy's & Girl's Club Board of Directors, City of Orlando Parks and Recreation Board, chairman of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the City of St. Augustine Historic Architectural Review Board, and vestry member and senior warden of Christ Church at Serenata Beach. In Highlands, Fred was on the Wildcat Cliffs Country Club Board and served as chair of the Long-Range Planning Committee. Currently Fred is the vestry senior warden at the Church of the Good Shepherd and chair of the Outreach Grants Committee.



### **Joan Towles Matthews**

Winter Park, FL and Highlands, NC

Joan has had a lifelong relationship with western North Carolina and been a constant admirer of Highlands Biological Foundation. Growing up in Atlanta, she enjoyed NC mountain trips and summer camps. After moving to Florida, she regularly visited parents in Highlands with children who now, as adults, also share a strong relationship with this special place. Her appreciation of HBF has grown from exploring its early nature center with family, to a supporter of its unique role in Highlands and on the Blue Ridge and Appalachian plateau.

As a professional in the environmental and conservation areas, Joan has served on several boards and agencies aligned with HBF's mission. As Senior Attorney in the Office of General Counsel, Florida Dept. of Agriculture, she focused on the Rural and Family Lands Conservation Program, Florida Forest Service, Land and Water Conservation Amendment litigation, and water policy. Her private legal practice also focuses on land use, real estate, business and association governance, contracts, and public policy.

As a Florida Bar member, she serves on the Environmental and Land Use Law Section Executive Committee, Florida Bar Journal Editorial Board and Eminent Domain Committee, providing insight to regional environmental issues and university research.

Lifelong volunteer community service includes board leadership with Orlando Museum of Art Council of 101, John's Island Community Service League, Orlando Opera Company, Maitland Parks and Recreation Board, and RMWC Alumni Council.

Joan received her Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Florida A&M University, Master of Urban and Regional Planning from George Washington University and B.A. from Randolph Macon Woman's College. She is an alumna of The Westminster Schools.



### **Kathy Ward (Bestor)**

Fairhope, Alabama and Highlands, NC

Kathy divides her time between Fairhope, Alabama, and Highlands, North Carolina. A native of Mobile, she attended Mary Baldwin College, where she earned a B.S. in psychology. Early in her career, she worked with troubled adolescents in hospitals in Staunton, Virginia, and Birmingham, Alabama, and later returned to Mobile, where she worked as a paralegal. Her commitment to service has included board work with the Florence Crittenton Home for mothers and volunteer work with Camp Smile, a camp for children with cancer. Other community efforts included her work with the Junior League of Mobile.

After marrying Bestor Ward, Kathy devoted herself to raising their two children while remaining actively engaged in her community. She dedicated many years to volunteering and fundraising for UMS-Wright Preparatory School and St. Paul's Episcopal School, where her children were students.

Kathy and Bestor have been coming to Highlands for 35 years, and after building their home here in 2014, she became increasingly active in the community. She has supported HBF for many years with her volunteer efforts at Highlands on the Half Shell, Summer Soirée, and Zahner lectures, and has hosted HBF events at her home. She also has served on the Dahlia Festival Committee and currently serves as Vice President of the Bowery Road Association.

In her free time, Kathy enjoys hiking, gardening, and mahjong, and she especially cherishes time with her two grandchildren, dear friends, and two dogs.



### **Gage LeQuire (Mark)**

Montgomery, AL and Highlands, NC

Gage LeQuire and her husband Mark share their time between Montgomery AL and Highlands NC. Gage has a BS from Auburn University in accounting. She had a career with Southern Company's Alabama Power Company for 19 ½ years in supervisory and managerial positions in the areas of Accounting, Public Relations, Commercial Marketing, Economic Development and The Alabama Power Foundation. While working in The Alabama Power Foundation, she managed two environmental and science education centers (The Water Course, A Center for Water and Environmental Education and The Alabama Science Center). She also served as a loaned executive to Hyundai Manufacturing of Alabama to assist Korean employees and their families assimilate into Alabama.

Gage has served on numerous non-profit boards including, The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, The American Cancer Society, Baptist Health Foundation, The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, The Montgomery Antiquarian Society, Hands-On River Region and is a graduate of Leadership Montgomery. For 10 years she and her husband organized and chaired a wine dinner fundraiser benefiting The American Cancer Society. Gage currently serves as President of her Highlands's neighborhood association, The Bowery. She has been an active participant in HBF activities for several years. Her hobbies include hiking, gardening, bridge, mahjong and traveling with her husband.