

Foundation Board Leaders Create Lasting Conservation Legacy via Impactful Leadership



Foundation Board member Brandy Wilson, second from left, hunts for bees and butterflies with the Colorado State University Pollinator Hotshots student team in the Barber Pool Conservation Area. (photo courtesy Brandy Wilson)

This is the 11th in a series of 12 articles about the 50th anniversary of the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands.

By Steve Stuebner

From the original roster of A-list board members who guided the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands in the beginning, the Foundation always has had a number of

prominent, smart, dedicated, passionate and influential people overseeing the 50-year course of the nonprofit organization.

Initially, the Foundation played a crucial role as the state’s first land trust in 1972 to receive the donation of valuable properties that often would become public parks. Out of more than 50 properties that were donated to the Foundation in the last half-century, more than half have been gifted or transferred to cities, counties, recreation

districts or states for development into public parks.

In rare circumstances, the Foundation has retained ownership of key open space lands such as Reinheimer Ranch in Ketchum and Barber Pool in Boise to fulfill the long-term vision for the properties.

Over the Foundation's 50-year history, many Idahoans served on the board and contributed to state's oldest nonprofit land trust. In this issue, we'd like to highlight some of the key board members who had lasting impacts.

Currently, three of the Foundation's board members, Board President Brian McDevitt, Board Treasurer Stephani Hilding and Board member Brandy Wilson, are focused on planning the future of the Barber Pool Conservation Area as one of the highest priorities for the Foundation. (See our March and October 50th anniversary newsletter issues for history and details about Barber Pool).

Below they tell us why they joined the Foundation Board of Directors and why they're passionate about the Barber Pool Conservation Area.

Brandy Wilson – Board member since 2021

Chair, Barber Pool Advisory Council since June 2018
Global Sustainability Director, JR Simplot Company

"I joined the Foundation's Board of Directors because I care about the Barber Pool Conservation Area," Wilson says. "As a long-time neighbor in the Barber Valley, and while serving on the Boise City Planning and Zoning Commission during the approval process for the Harris Ranch and Barber Valley developments, I learned just how special this place is.

"Through multiple hearings and workshops with biologists and agency staff focused on wildlife, I learned that this area is absolutely critical. Whether you're focused on deer and elk migrating here from the Sawtooths, or the importance of this slackwater area as a migratory bird flyway, or even looking at little Western fence lizards and showy monarch butterflies, the place where the foothills meet the river is essential to the ecological health of Boise, the Treasure Valley, and Idaho.

"After helping to secure wildlife corridors and mitigation funding during the planning process, I wanted to continue that work and became a volunteer with the Foundation, leading the multi-stakeholder Barber Pool Advisory Council. I was later invited to join the Board and have since had the opportunity to learn about many other Foundation-owned sites that have similar local and regional significance.

"The Foundation is at an inflection point. With more opportunities for conservation coming every day across the state, plus the burden of taking care of its existing properties in the face of a rapidly growing population, the work is becoming more challenging. The Board needs people and financial resources to truly serve the communities and



Board Treasurer Stephani Hilding leads volunteer cleanup activities on the Gregerson property in Barber Pool. (IFPL photo)

locations where we have management responsibility. At this 50-year mark, we're at a point where we can take a look at the past and the future and figure out how to create an organization that can rise to the aspiration of our statewide mission. We need dedicated, hands-on people who are interested in steering the Foundation into the future."

Stephani Hilding

Board Secretary/Treasurer
Co-chair Barber Pool Master Planning Committee

Stephani joined the Foundation Board in 2016.

"When my husband and I moved to Boise 15 years ago, I think it was more about escaping the crowds and traffic and craziness of California than anything else. Initially, we weren't looking for anything in particular in Idaho. And then we were very fortunate to find a house for sale in Boise next to Barber Pool. At the time we bought the house, about all we knew was that this large area of marshes and cottonwood forest was protected from development. We were astonished not only by its size and beauty, but also by the abundance of wildlife in the middle of a thriving city. When we moved in, there were deer on our lawn, raptors and waterfowl of all kinds flying overhead, and even a large bull elk grazing just outside our back yard fence.

"Our appreciation for Barber Pool has grown over the years. As I am writing this in late November, the marsh and forest are still wearing their fall colors and a group of 10 trumpeter swans just landed in the Boise River.



Board President Brian McDevitt and his wife, Lisa.

“Over the years, I began to find out more about IFPL, the land trust that owns and manages the Barber Pool Conservation Area. I learned that it was the oldest land trust in Idaho, and that it had a long and impressive history of protecting other beautiful and historically important places across the state. I also learned about some of the extraordinary people who served on its board. One of them, Chuck McDevitt, was our neighbor.

“Chuck was well known in the community as a distinguished lawyer and former chief justice of the Idaho Supreme Court. He was also very active in all kinds of other public interest work. With all those accomplishments, and that stern judicial look on his face, I was a little intimidated at first. But, over time, with a fair amount of good-natured ribbing between us, he became my good friend, even though I was from California!

“Eventually, after pestering Chuck with endless questions about the Barber Pool and IFPL, he invited me to join the Board as the treasurer. Whether this was because he thought I could really be of service, or just to stop all the questions, he never said. But it has been one of the great privileges of my life to work with him, and with other members of the board, to continue the important mission of IFPL. And, in a world where so much changes so quickly, I get a great deal of satisfaction when I think about all that IFPL has done over its 50-year history to make sure that some of the most beautiful and important places in Idaho are never changed.”

Hilding has deep experience keeping the books for a number of businesses and organizations over the years. That made her a good fit for the board treasurer position.

Brian McDevitt

Foundation Board President

Brian McDevitt was recruited by his father Chuck McDevitt to serve on the Foundation's board of directors in 2006. As the current board president, Brian has been very active in working on the Gregerson property acquisition, Triplett property acquisition and current and future management of the Barber Pool Conservation Area.

Brian also recently negotiated the land gift of the 7,180-acre Eighteen Mile Ranch near Dubois from TR Shelby of Sheridan, Wyo. (see our September 2022 newsletter issue for details).

“It's been pretty amazing and scary to see the rapid growth occurring in Idaho over the last 5-10 years,” McDevitt says. “If anything, that has inspired us on the Foundation Board to be even more vigilant in preserving more lands

with open space qualities and wildlife habitat while we can.

“That said, we are starting a capital campaign to raise more maintenance funds for Reinheimer Ranch in Ketchum. We're calling it the Reinheimer Ranch Preservation Fund. We also have to make sure that we take care of the existing properties we own to ensure that we can cover the costs of upkeep and maintenance so these properties don't degrade over time,” he says.

Brian grew up in Boise. He graduated from the University of Maryland at College Park with a degree in economics. He stayed back East after finishing college, working in Washington D.C. for 10 years for the U.S. Department of Energy, the Justice Department and the private sector. He also served in the Army National Guard.

Brian returned to Boise to work for Boise State University in the Information Technology department in the early 2000s. He finished a 20-year stint at Boise State as the Director for Research Computing.

As a volunteer, Brian has served in a number of community service positions. He served on the Bureau of Land Management's Boise District Resource Advisory Council, he served on the Southeast Boise Neighborhood Association for 16 years, and served as a director for the New York Irrigation Board and Boise Project Board of Control for 18 years.



Foundation Board member Larry Leasure

Larry Leasure

Longest-serving Foundation Board Member
Chairman and CEO
White-Leasure Development Company

Larry Leasure is currently the longest-serving board member of the Foundation, having joined the board in 1975. He’s been actively involved in many of the Foundation’s land acquisitions over the years, including the Reinheimer Ranch in Ketchum, River’s Edge open space area south of Hailey, Barber Pool Conservation Area and more.

Larry’s expertise in land acquisition, development and management has been crucial in advising the Board on the potential costs and benefits of land acquisitions for open space conservation. He also has been actively involved in fund-raising activities for the Foundation.

Larry co-founded White-Leasure Development Company in 1972. Throughout his real estate career he has specialized in the acquisition and assemblage of land for major mixed-use projects including shopping centers, major historical building renovations and other commercial, industrial, office, and residential projects. Noteworthy projects in Boise include the The Grove Hotel and the 5,000-seat event center and hockey arena, now sponsored by Idaho Central Credit Union, Boise Town Square and 8th Street Marketplace.

Community service always has been important to Larry. He has been involved in a wide variety of civic activities; has served as past Director of the Boise Area Chamber of Commerce, Silver Sage Girl Scout Council, Boise Philharmonic, past President and Campaign Chairman of

the United Way of Ada County, past President of the Boise Gallery of Art, founding Board Member of the Boise Area Economic Development Council, and founding Board Member of St. Alphonsus Hospital Foundation.

Don Weilmunster

Foundation Board President for over 25 years
Idaho Rancher

Don Weilmunster was a leading force for the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands. He joined the Board in 1977. Under the tutelage of Board President Hope Kading, he demonstrated loyalty to the cause and upfront leadership that earned the respect of his colleagues. He was elected Foundation President of the Board in 1993 and served in that capacity until stepping down in 2020, the same year he passed away. Weilmunster was always punctual and had a perfect attendance record for Foundation Board meetings.

Weilmunster’s specialty was in cattle ranching, natural resources and land investment. When he saw opportunities to buy land and ranches with rich natural resource values, he often seized the moment. At one point, he owned and operated 30,000 acres of private rangeland and timberland in Idaho, much of it in Boise County. His skills as a rancher, landowner and investor would provide vital expertise to the Foundation.



Don Weilmunster, left, and Chuck McDevitt (IFPL photo)

Weilmunster was actively involved in the Board’s acquisitions and projects during his tenure, including helping the Foundation raise \$100,000 in a year’s time to provide a public corridor for the Wood River Trail to go through Reinheimer Ranch south of Ketchum. He also assisted the Foundation’s effort to gift a portion of the Barber Pool and Conservation Area to Ada County to provide a corridor for the Boise River Greenbelt to be built on the old railroad line from the IDPR state office out to Diversion Dam.



Chuck McDavitt enjoys a lighter moment at home.

He helped guide the Foundation's acquisition of key property on Plantation Island to allow the Boise Greenbelt to "bridge" the gap between Garden City and City of Boise's pathways. Help from Weilmunster's friend Ron Yanke and Yanke Machine Shop provided the two bridges spanning the Boise River from the old Ada County fairgrounds to the Plantation golf course and subdivision. One of those bridges had to be removed by a crane during "Snowmageddon" in 2017. It was restored following a fund-raising effort by the Foundation and put into place on a bridge abutment that had been restored for long-term use.

One other significant project to mention:

- Harriman East – a cooperative river management project initiated in 1986 on Harriman East preserved the pristine quality of the spring-fed Henry's Fork. Fly fishing groups worked together with local ranchers to install solar-powered fence for 2.5 miles on both sides of the river as a demonstration that man, cattle and the environment could live together. The project earned a Certificate of Merit in the 1987 "Take Pride in America" National Awards Program.

Weilmunster served on a number of other nonprofit boards: Member, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Advisory Council to the National Park Service, 1981- 1989; Executive Board Member, President's Council on Rural America, 1990-1992, Member, Idaho Rural Development Council, 1992-1994, Member, Board of Boise County

Commissioners, 1991-1993, Member, National Public Lands Advisory Council (NPLAC), 1992-1995, Chairperson, BLM Lower Snake River Resource Advisory Council, 1995-2006.

Charles "Chuck" McDavitt

Foundation Board member

The Hon. Charles F. "Chuck" McDavitt, former Chief Justice of the Idaho Supreme Court, served on the Foundation Board for more than 20 years, often handling legal matters for the non-profit. He lived for many years next to Barber Pool. He appreciated nature and liked being around animals. He raised goats and alfalfa on his property by Barber Pool.

Born in Pocatello, McDavitt died in 2021 at the age of 89. He had seven children and was married for 67 years to Ginny McDavitt.

"Chuck was a promoter of parks and masterfully facilitated complex legal and policy issues in a way that will benefit the people of Idaho for generations to come. Idaho truly is a better place because of Chuck McDavitt," said Governor Brad Little in a public statement.

Chuck was an expert on Idaho law. He had an extensive background in asset and land acquisition. His knowledge of conservation easements, charitable trusts, charitable donations, gift by devise, and activities peculiar to land trusts were invaluable to the Foundation.

Two relatively recent Foundation projects that McDavitt worked on included the Janet Jarvis 51.5-acre gift of open space in 2011, and a 917-acre conservation easement on the Kackley Family Ranch property near Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Eastern Idaho.

After he retired, McDavitt chaired the Boise Parks Board at a pivotal time when the City of Boise contemplated putting the \$10 million Boise Foothills open space serial levy on the ballot. McDavitt chaired the successful Boise Foothills grass-roots open space campaign in 1999-2001, with the backing of hundreds of hikers, mountain bikers, trail-runners and business owners, Republican Mayor Brent Coles, the Idaho Conservation League and Lauren McLean, the campaign manager.

McDavitt went on to chair the Boise Foothills Open Space Committee that oversaw the expenditure of \$10 million in open space funds for the next 10 years, protecting 12,500 acres of land between Stack Rock, Bogus Basin Ski Area, the Boise Foothills complex, and the Boise River Greenbelt. The strategic acquisitions helped fulfill the vision of the 180-mile Ridge to Rivers Trail System.

McDavitt played a key role in the creation of the massive Simplot Youth Sports Complex in East Boise, a place where hundreds of kids of all ages play soccer and softball. He also was involved in the development of sports parks in West



Judy Peavey-Derr, speaking, Sharon Hubler and others celebrate the newly restored Plantation Greenbelt bridge.

During her first year on the Ada Commission, Peavey-Derr also was actively involved in starting the Boise River Trail Foundation. She asked former Micron executive and board member Ward Parkinson to serve as the president of the new nonprofit. The vision for the Trail Foundation was to help push

Boise during his tenure on the Boise Parks & Recreation Board.

McDevitt served on the Idaho Supreme Court eight years, becoming Chief Justice in 1993. Prior to his service on the court, McDevitt was a businessman and attorney. He served in the two terms in the Idaho Legislature from 1962 to 1966. He was general counsel for Boise Cascade Corp. in the 1960s and vice president of New York-based Singer Co. in the 1970s.

Judy Peavey-Derr

Foundation Board Vice President

Judy Peavey-Derr joined the Foundation board of directors in 2006. She had been asked originally to join the Foundation board by Hope Kading and Sharon Hubler in the late 1980s. But Peavey-Derr had just been elected to her first term on the Ada County Commission at the time. She felt she was too consumed with her work for the Ada County Commission to take on anything else. So she declined.

Peavey-Derr got to know Don Weilmunster during the late 1980s, when Don was serving as a Boise County Commissioner and she was an Ada County Commissioner. They attended some of the same meetings together, and they had a similar background. Judy was raised on a farm and ranch in Twin Falls. Through that experience, she had an appreciation for open space.

“When I saw a lot of land being developed when I was on the Ada Commission, I felt that we had to preserve some of the land as open space,” Peavey-Derr says. “You can’t save it all. But if you think about the value of things like Yellowstone Park or our Idaho State Parks, there are some lands with values that can never be replaced. I felt it was important to save open space and develop trails for our future generations to enjoy.”

for the Boise River Greenbelt to run from Lucky Peak to Eagle Island State Park by 1990, Idaho’s Centennial Year. The group didn’t quite reach the goal, but they made significant in-roads in establishing a Greenbelt pathway west from Glenwood to Eagle Road.

Following her tenure on the Ada Commission, Peavey-Derr went on to form the Foundation for Ada-Canyon Trails System (FACTS) a nonprofit group that advocates for a non-motorized greenbelt pathway from Lucky Peak to Parma at the confluence of where the Boise River flows into the Snake River. The vision of this group would provide a public trail along the Boise River for more than 30 miles from Eagle to Parma.

Peavey-Derr remembers Jim Poulson, former Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation staffer, encouraging her to continue with a nonprofit to push for more trail access along the Boise River. “He was like, Judy, you can’t let it go!”

“I headed up that effort for 20 years, and we got very close to Eagle Island,” she says.

Before Peavey-Derr joined the Foundation board, she served on the boards of the Greater Boise Auditorium District and Ada County Highway District. All told, she contributed 18 years of public service.

After joining the Foundation board, Peavey-Derr has been a great champion for acquiring more open space. She’s been actively involved in the Foundation’s many fund-raising activities to buy the Triplett property, assisting the Idaho Shakespeare Festival with securing the land for its current location in Barber Pool, and with acquiring the Gregerson property in the heart of Barber Pool.

When the Foundation organizes house parties for fund-raising events, they tee up Larry Leasure and Judy Peavey-

Derr to make the pitch with an off-the-cuff, stump speech to invited guests. Foundation officials call this the “Larry and Judy show.”

“Larry kind of lays out the facts of the situation, and I do the cheerleader piece,” she says with a laugh. “I draw on my background, growing up on a ranch in Twin Falls, and the need to preserve open space and natural resources before it’s all gone.”

Peavey-Derr is pleased that the Foundation continues to have a strong working relationship with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and Director Susan Buxton. She recalls how the Foundation’s original mission had a lot to do with acquiring open space lands with potential for state or local parks and recreation facilities such as campgrounds and trails.

Looking ahead, Peavey-Derr would like to support IDPR in developing more state parks when the time and situation are right. More trails are another high priority in open space areas.

“I love bike paths, and I’d like to see more bike paths get developed,” she says. “When we get a commitment to acquire more open space, I want people to have the opportunity to look at it and appreciate it. When we create a situation for that to occur, we can look to those people who have experienced the wonder of open space and trails to support them in the future.”

Hope Kading

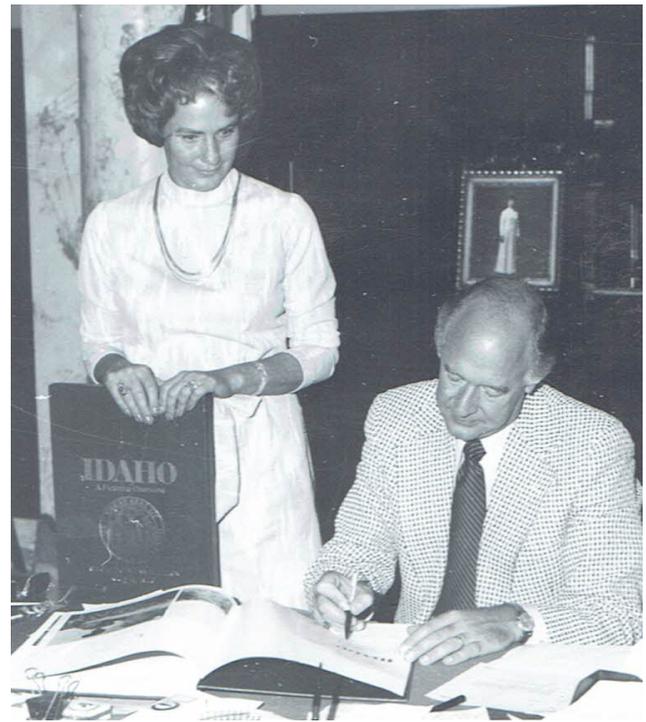
First Foundation Board President

Hope Kading was the first chair of the Foundation in 1972, an A-list civic leader in Boise who had developed her citizen activist chops advocating for public schools at a local and state level.

Long-time Foundation Executive Director Sharon Hubler describes Kading as a colorful dynamic leader.

“She was indeed a force who was respected equally by Democrats and Republicans alike,” Hubler says. “She had flashing blue eyes, she had a lot of charisma, and she really knew how to crack the whip to get things done. She was pretty fearless, and we had a strong board to back her up.”

Indeed, the Foundation’s first board of director’s was a powerful and prominent group of nine people from all corners of Idaho. They were initially appointed to the board by former Governor Cecil D. Andrus in 1972. The other original board members were: Ernie Day of Boise, Art Manley of Coeur d’Alene, R.J. Bruning of Wallace, former Supreme Court Justice Robert Huntley Jr., of Pocatello, former Governor Robert E. Smylie, who had convinced the Idaho Legislature to create a new state parks department in 1965, Barnee Erkins of Buhl, Dick Vetter of Boise, Wynne Blake of Lewiston, and Eddie Pedersen of Idaho Falls.



Hope Kading gets her “Idaho” book signed by Gov. Andrus

Kading had experience advocating for public school funding in Idaho, through local PTAs, and also at the state level, encouraging the Idaho Legislature to allocate income from state Endowment Lands to public schools. Knowing how to advocate for school funding at a statewide level made it possible for Kading to learn about community and statewide needs for parks and conservation lands, Hubler said. “Knowing about the value of Endowment Lands, it was natural for her to advocate for parks and conservation lands as well,” she said.

Kading oversaw many of the Foundation’s initial land acquisitions in the formative years of the 1970s. These monumental land deals included assisting the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation in receiving the 16,000-acre Harriman Park, acquiring the 1,000-acre Harriman East on the Henry’s Fork, receiving a gift of land around “Boise Cascade Lake” for what would become Veterans Memorial State Park, the 110-acre Reinheimer Ranch at the gateway to Ketchum, and 411 acres from Boise Cascade Corp. for Barber Pool.

Hope Kading has an interesting background. She was born Feb. 28, 1933 in Rock Island, Illinois. Her mother was an ordained minister in the Assembly of God. Kading attended high school in New York City and won a scholarship to the Robert Powers Modeling School. After graduation, she worked for clothing designer Tom Brigance and later as a personal assistant for singer Peggy Lee.

In 1954, Kading was visiting a sister in Boise where she met Richard Kading. After their marriage and eventual choice of Boise as their home, she became involved in a wide array of



L-R, C.W. “Skip” Wright, an executive with Associated Logging Contractors, Sharon Hubler, Executive Director of the Foundation, and Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus. Circa 1977. (photo courtesy Boise State Archives.)

social and political activities, from the Boise Philharmonic Auxiliary to the Idaho Young Republicans. In 1974, Kading ran unsuccessfully for the office of lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket in the primary election. She also made an unsuccessful bid for the Boise City Council in 1977. Kading died in 2000 in Boise.

Sharon L. Hubler

Foundation Executive Director 1976-2010

Sharon Hubler was the backbone of the Foundation’s operations for 34 years!

Hubler grew up in Caldwell and graduated from the College of Idaho in 1972 with a bachelor’s degree in psychology.

Hope Kading hired Hubler in March 1976 as a part-time executive director. She had met Kading when she ran for Idaho Lt. Governor; Hubler was the Canyon County campaign chair. “I admired her for her work on the Education Commission of the States and, specifically, for what she and her husband Dick Kading had done to ensure appropriate funding for public schools,” Hubler says.

“My experience working for a number of nonprofits such as state organizations related to Hospital Auxiliaries and the Mental Health Association of Idaho along with my love of land as a second-generation Idahoan was part and parcel of our partnership,” she says. “My graduation from the College of Idaho in 1972 with a family of five made this position very helpful as it was not strictly 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, as with most profits, I grew the position, became full time and of course worked plenty of overtime.”

Hubler became an expert in the operations of Idaho’s first nonprofit land trust by virtue of guiding the Foundation’s land acquisitions, management and maintenance activities for decades. Daily operations could involve communications with landowners, parks professionals, appraisers, corporate donors, real estate professionals, and more.

She had comprehensive knowledge of environmental and natural resources issues, grant opportunities, fund-raising, land management, parks development, and open space management. She also was the point person for the Foundation’s contact with national and state legislative leaders.

Sharon Hubler’s other professional affiliations and volunteer activities include:

Elected to a 26-member Board of Directors of the National Society for Park Resources, 1986-1990; Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Directors of the National Society for Park Resources, 1990-1998; Board of Trustees of the National Recreation and Park Association, 1991-2000; State Delegate to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Citizen-Board Member Branch, 2000-2005; President, NRPA Citizen-Board Member Branch, 2005; Board of Directors, Boise Philharmonic Association, 1977-1981; Director, Boise River Trail Foundation, 1987-1995; Board of Directors, Silver Sage Girl Scout Council, 1988-2001; Board of Directors, Ballet Idaho, 1990-1994; Member, Les Bois Tree Task Force, 1993-1995; Secretary, Foundation for Ada/Canyon Trail Systems, 1998-present; Idaho Commission on the Arts, 1981-1987; Member, Boise Heritage Preservation Committee, 1991-1993; Member, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Task Force, 1993-1996; Member, Bald Eagle Task Force, 1994-1996.

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