



# Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society

## Slate for board of trustees

In January, the Board of Trustees appointed a Nominating Committee in accordance with the society bylaws, Article XI, Section 1. Members are Chair Mary Jo Frick, Luanne Betz and Joan Connors. In accordance with Article XI, Section 2 the slate of Officers and Trustees proposed for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 are the following:

### Luanne Betz

#### President

Luanne joined the Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society in 2011 and has served on the board as a Trustee, Membership and Program chairs and chaired umpteen committees and volunteered at our orchid shows. She also is our FLOS.org webmaster, administrator of Wild Apricot, our membership application, and writes a monthly column for our newsletter.



Luanne's volunteer service includes treasurer and southern regional supervisor for Lambda Kappa Sigma International Pharmacy Fraternity, treasurer and bookkeeper for JPT High School Band Association, PTA/PTO

among various executive and committee positions. She is concurrently president of the Garden Club of Coral Springs after holding the treasurer position for 13 years. She also has organized Gardenfest of Coral Springs for many years.

Luanne is a Walgreens pharmacist (37 years and counting), and attended the University of Georgia, (proud Bulldog!). She is a certified Master Gardener and is passionate about environmental issues. She and her husband Dave Thompson, also a FLOS member, are citizen scientists, diving for the nonprofit Reef Environmental Education Foundation. She has two grown sons, pets Binky the bunny, two kitties and lives in Coral Springs where she enjoys tending her extensive award-winning, Florida-friendly, garden.

**Luanne is on the slate to serve as President.**

### Len Emory

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President/Program Chair, Conservation Committee

After retiring from a 29-year career in corporate finance as a director of global shared services and manufacturing teams with the pharmaceutical firm Merck, Len joined FLOS in 2022. He has attended the annual orchid show almost every year since 2007, and has really fallen in love with orchids. Len became a Trustee in 2024 and currently serves as our Program Chair. He also oversaw our first-ever budget for our 2025 orchid show and regularly volunteers at membership drives and at our shows.



Len has a Masters Degree in International Business

from the University of South Carolina with a focus in International Finance, Marketing and French. During his corporate career, Len participated in the finance community mentorship programs, nurtured talent from around the globe and lead talent development initiatives within the U.S.

Len joined FLOS to learn how to grow orchids more successfully and to meet folks who share in his budding passion. He joined the board, offering his financial expertise and ample organizational skills to help the society thrive in its nonprofit mission. Len lives in Fort Lauderdale with his husband Perry, who is also a member, and Cleo, their Italian Greyhound who runs the household.

**Len is on the slate to serve as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President/Program Chair.**

### Olivier Turina

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President/Membership Chair

Olivier joined FLOS in 2014. The 2013 Orchid Show is what kickstarted his passion for orchids, and he learned so much coming to our meetings. He got an



opportunity to give back to our great society as a Trustee in 2020 and has served in a variety of roles. He has been a monthly contributor to the newsletter since 2018, is a regular speaker at orchid society meetings around South Florida, including our own. He helped modernized our Library with the help of former president Rich Ackerman, raising its profile with members who actively

check out books. He has generously hosted many Keiki Club meetings at his Orchid House in Fort Lauderdale, has participated as an orchid show judging clerk since 2018 and now serves as head clerk for judging.

In 2019, he started the YouTube channel "Orchid House, Fort Lauderdale, Florida" which has close to 400,000 views and more than 4,000 active subscribers from all over the world. Olivier is a recognized orchid-growing expert and has received seven awards from the American Orchid Society.

Olivier is a Realtor with Atlantic Properties International and speaks seven languages. He has a BA in economics and finance from ICHEC, Brussels. He previously worked in the corporate world in various financial positions in his native Belgium.

He lives in Fort Lauderdale with his husband of 25 years, Tommy.

**Olivier is on the slate to serve as a Two Year Trustee.**

# Olivia Turowski

## Recording Secretary, House Committee

Olivia Turowski joined the society in 2019. She enjoys volunteering for the annual show, at the Bonnet House, participating in native orchid installations around the South Florida, and serving on the House Committee setting up and breaking down our monthly meetings. She joined the board as a Trustee in 2021 and after serving three years, began serving as Recording Secretary in 2024.



After retiring from teaching middle school in Connecticut, she and her husband Steve, also a member who works on the House Committee, moved to Hollywood where they love gardening. The couple joined FLOS wanting to venture into orchids.

**Olivia is on the slate to serve as Recording Secretary.**

# Doreen Christensen

## Corresponding Secretary, Conservation Program Chair, Public Relations Chair, Bylaws Committee Chair

Doreen joined the orchid society in 2020, serving on the Conservation Committee and as our Newsletter Editor through 2024. She became a Trustee in 2022 and Conservation Chair and



Corresponding Secretary in 2024. She chaired our Holiday Party in 2022 and has volunteered at many membership drives and orchid shows.

As Public Relations Chair, Doreen oversees communications on our website, social media channels, in our newsletters, annual rosters and show programs. A veteran journalist, she uses her communications expertise to craft our messaging for events, including our orchid shows, envisioning and executing marketing campaigns, content and video creation, advertising and marketing design, mass mail and email marketing campaigns, print and online promotions, ad buying, content creation of print, radio, video and ad collateral, managing press releases and media coverage. She also acts as our spokesperson and has stood as the public face of our organization. She is passionate about our conservation efforts, which has reintroduced thousands of native orchids into the South Florida landscape, a core mission.

Until retiring in 2020, Doreen was an award-winning 40-year veteran at the South Florida Sun Sentinel. She served in a variety of roles, most notably as the paper's Money columnist known as "Doreen's Deals." She wrote a popular savings blog, appeared weekly on WSFL's "Morning Show," produced and starred in a video series and was a regular contributor on WLRN Public Radio. Her work on an 18-month video series "Voices of Change" on the Parkland massacre was cited in the Sun Sentinel's 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. She

and her husband Dan, also a journalist and FLOS member, love to travel. They have two grown sons and live in Oakland Park.

**Doreen is on the slate to serve as Corresponding Secretary.**

# Mary Jo Frick

## Treasurer, Nominating Committee Chair

Mary Jo joined our society in 2021 after attending shows since 1984. She has proudly served as FLOS Treasurer since 2024. She met Rich Ackerman when



trying unsuccessfully to participate in the Million Orchid Project through Fairchild when he told her she did not have to live in Fort Lauderdale to be a FLOS member. After joining, Mary Jo worked on conservation and helped at various events every year.

Mary Jo has worked within the Catholic Archdiocese for more than 40 years. She currently is President and CEO of Catholic Health Services, overseeing its financial operations which includes specialty rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, home health agencies, housing for the elderly, specialty education schools and cemeteries. She also has held position as Vice President of Finance, Director of Accounting Services and Director of Finance. She is a Certified Catholic Cemetery Executive and concurrently serves as CHS CEO, Executive Director of the Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Miami and President of the National Catholic Cemetery Conference where she has chaired and served on various committees since 2010. She has partnered with FLOS to plant native orchids in both cemeteries she manages.

Mary Jo is a past member of the Audit and Compliance Committee of Holy Cross Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, past Secretary/Treasurer of Catholic Hospice in Miami and past chair of the Finance Committee of her parish. She has two grown daughters and lives in Coral Springs with her husband, Ludwig, who is also a member.

**Mary Jo is on the slate to serve as Treasurer.**

# Joan Connors

## Past President/1 Year Trustee, American Orchid Society representative

Joan joined the society in 2004 and has steered the organization for many years as President. She also has served on the board as Corresponding Secretary,



Recording Secretary, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President/ Programs and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President/ Membership and as a Trustee. Joan became President to fill a half term vacated after a President resigned in 2008. She then served as President in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2021 and 2022 and has remained on the board

serving as either Past President or trustee for 20 years. She has been FLOS's American Orchid Society

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representative since 2005. Joan also serves on the Conservation Committee, Scholarship Committee and worked on creating criteria and requirements for our scholarships. She also has served on the Holiday Party Committee for 10 years, sourcing orchid gifts and assembling centerpieces. Joan has been the AOS Judging Chair for three of our orchid shows and has performed various administrative jobs for several of our annual orchid shows, including advertising and plant registration. She also oversees ribbon judging for our the members at monthly meeting, assisted by three fellow AOS judges.

Joan is a Brooklyn native who retired from a successful career on Wall Street in 2000. She moved to Florida, working for 10 years at the AOS headquarters in Delray Beach as greenhouse manager.

**Joan is on the slate to serve as Past President.**

## Joe Akin

### 1 Year Trustee, Holiday Party Chair, Public Relations Committee

Joe served as Parliamentarian in 2024 and joined the board of directors as a Trustee in 2025.

He serves on the membership team, serves as chair



of our annual holiday party (2024-2025), was a volunteer and orchid show judging clerk in 2023 and 2024, assisted with the Keiki displays and also coordinates FLOS polo shirt sales. He also serves on our Public Relations Committee, acting as liaison for various Chamber of Commerce events to promote our annual orchid shows. Joe regularly volunteers for membership outreach at Bonnet House Orchid Festival and Equality Garden Club Tropical Plant Fair.

A former registered nurse, Joe was Vice President of Oriental Rugs in Fort Lauderdale, retiring in 2022. He was on the board of the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce for seven years, chaired the Oakland Park and Wilton Manors Uptown Council, and was president of Business Networking International. He is vice chair of the board of the United Church of Christ in Fort Lauderdale

**Joe is on the slate to serve as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President/ Membership Chair.**

## Karen Fleisher

### 1 Year Trustee, Keiki Club Chair

Karen has been a member of our society since 2018, serving in a variety of positions since in 2020, including Parliamentarian, Trustee, Corresponding Secretary and



Sunshine Committee Chair. She was the Holiday Party Chair in 2023, as well as being on the Holiday Party Committee through 2025. She served on the Nominating Committee in 2023, handled show presale tickets in 2021-2022, and was the show Volunteer Chair in 2023-2024. She was Keiki Club Co-Chair since

2021 and took the reins as Keiki Club Chair in 2025.

Karen was a pesticide chemist at the University of Miami School of Medicine and then worked at the

Miami-Dade Police Department for 33 years as a Forensic Chemist/Expert Witness and Safety Officer in the Crime Lab. She received training at the DEA, ATF, FBI and the National Fire Academy, was a certified trainer at the Police Academy and has written journal articles and book chapters on pesticide research and forensic topics.

Karen was instrumental in starting a grassroots organization that worked to pass Florida legislation for improved benefits for forensic professionals and Medical Examiners. This involved traveling across the state to get these individuals to join this new organization to fund efforts, working with a lobbyist to help write bills on their behalf and arranging numerous trips to Tallahassee, coordinating with personnel from across Florida to speak with senators and representatives to explain the group's unique safety issues. Additionally, she gave technical advice to producers of "Miami Vice," "CSI: Miami" and the movie "Manhunter." After retiring, she became interested in learning about growing orchids, now with too many to count in her collection.

**Karen is on the slate as 3 Year Trustee.**

## Roger Triplett

### 2 Year Trustee

Roger has been a member for the past five years.

He joined the board in 2024 and was in charge of organizing and overseeing the volunteers at "Orchid Renaissance," our 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Show and Sale.



Roger and his wife Trish were professional dancers who founded and ran Triplett Dance Academy in New Jersey for 36 years. They attended Butler University in Indianapolis where both received Bachelor of Arts degrees with honors. Over the years, they taught

thousands of students, with many of them going on to have careers in the arts.

Roger performed for five years with the prestigious Pennsylvania Ballet and his musical theater experience includes extensive Equity productions. He was twice elected to the Board of Governors of the American Guild of Musical Artists, AGMA, and he has been on the faculty of the Pennsylvania Ballet, Princeton Ballet and the University of South Florida. He is sought after as a guest teacher and competition judge for major national dance organizations. He was guest teacher at Groupe Internationale des 8 in Perpignan, France. He volunteers at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts.

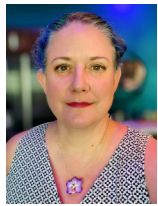
Roger's enjoyment of growing orchids started when he was put in charge of taking care of his son's orchid collection in the basement when he left for college. (His son Ty is now an American Orchid Society judge.) Today, Roger enjoys growing outdoors and gaining more orchid knowledge at our monthly meetings and speaking with our members.

**Roger is on the slate to serve as 1 Year Trustee.**

# Gretchen Denton

## 3 Year Trustee, Newsletter Editor, Library Chair, Public Relations Committee

Gretchen developed a passion for orchids during the pandemic and joined the society in 2022, becoming an active member of the Keiki Club. In 2023, she took on the role of managing our social media accounts as part of our Public Relations Committee to help market our annual orchid shows. Gretchen has expanded our society's digital presence to include Instagram to further enhance outreach efforts. Her dedication led to an invitation to serve as a Trustee in 2024, during which time she also volunteered as the organization's Librarian. She assumed the role of Newsletter Editor in 2025, continuing her commitment to engage and inform our members and the orchid community.



Gretchen graduated Magna Cum Laude from Jacksonville University where she received her BFA in Studio Art with a concentration in Computer Art and Design, and a Minor in Painting.

She has more than 30 years of experience in the field of Product Design and User Experience in the area of Data Center Infrastructure Management and Environmental Monitoring.

**Gretchen is on the slate to serve as a 2 Year Trustee.**

# Justine Vishnesky

## 2 Year Trustee, Conservation Committee

Justine organized our educational program at our 2025 show. She also was our volunteer coordinator for the Bonnet House Orchid Festival in April.



Justine retired from Riverside School District in Taylor, Pennsylvania, as an Administrative Assistant and was a Certified Nursing Home Administrator at Taylor Nursing and Rehabilitation. She and her husband John also owned and operated Ben & Jerry's, Wetzels Pretzels and Jimmy John's franchises in Pennsylvania.

After moving to Pompano Beach, she began waking up to beautiful orchids mounted on trees at their new residence and fell in love, which inspired her to get involved with the Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society.

Justine and her husband of 40 years raised three wonderful sons.

**Justine is on the slate to serve as 1 Year Trustee.**

# Grace Boston

## 3 Year Trustee

Grace has been a FLOS member for three years, and organizes our rambles. Her current project is coordinating a Spring overnight ramble in May visiting orchid nurseries across the state. During her 36-year professional career, Grace was an Information Technologist and Software Developer specializing in Data Warehousing, Data Integration and Business Intelligence.



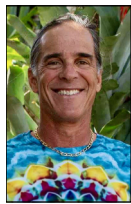
Grace has always loved plants, specifically flowers. Orchids became a part of her life about 25 years ago when she received a small Dendrobium as a Mother's Day gift. The rest is history.

**Grace is on the slate to serve as a 3 year Trustee.**

# Keith London

## Parliamentarian

Keith joined the society in 2024 and was appointed by the board to serve as Parliamentarian in 2025. A former mayor, vice mayor and commissioner in



Hallandale Beach from 2006-2018, he is the principal of Keith London, Inc., a political consulting firm founded in 2012. As an elected official in Hallandale, he oversaw a budget of \$135 million, steering business and growth for the city. Keith currently advises municipal, county and state agencies on initiatives on FDOT, MPO, CRAs, legislative directives, ordinances, procurement and state statutes, evaluating and responding to grant requests, letters of interest, RFQs and RFPs. He is an expert in Public, Private, Partnerships, land use, zoning, development process, staff relations, elected official relationships and community outreach.

Among his many accomplishments in public service, Keith also is a Certified County Court mediator, served on the Miami-Dade Florida Bar Grievance Committee, is a Guardian Ad Litem.

A certified Master Gardner, Keith's passion is growing plants, especially heirloom tomatoes and orchids. He also is a Broward County Water Ambassador, receiving an Emerald Award and Florida-Friendly Yard Gold Certification Award in 2023.

**Keith will be appointed to serve as Parliamentarian.**