

Marion Kane

Executive Director

Barr Foundation, Boston

Marion is the Executive Director of the Barr Foundation, a new private family foundation serving the greater Boston region. Over the past year, the Foundation has been engaged in thinking and planning around a unique strategic premise: *what if foundations are really in the knowledge business more than the dollars business.* Applying this principle has meant designing a foundation that centrally positions knowledge creation and sharing and transitioning/aligning staffing, programming and grantmaking practices to support knowledge-based goals.

Marion began her career as a journalist at ABC in New York. She later became the outings editor of the Sierra Club Magazine in San Francisco and then moved to Mt. Desert Island, Maine in 1972 with her husband Dan and two young children to start a new college with a focus on human ecology. (Any time you have trouble defining “community foundation”, try explaining a degree in Human Ecology.) In Maine, she worked as a feature writer and editor for the Bar Harbor Times and Director of Public Relations for the College before leaving her job to help start the Maine Community Foundation.

With no previous experience in philanthropy, she and the founding executive director learned the foundation business from the ground up. Among other roles, Marion set up the foundation’s accounting system, IT system, grantmaking program, development office, investment program and public relations function. She eventually presided over seven software conversions for the accounting and grantmaking systems! In 1989 she became President of the Foundation and led its growth from \$4 million dollars in assets to \$85 million in 1999, and from two staff to 14. She also founded the Maine Grantmakers Association and the Maine Grants Information Center which promote the development of philanthropy in Maine and serve the funding and nonprofit community.

Marion graduated from Wellesley College with a BA in English literature in 1966. A confirmed country girl who has canoed every stream and climbed every mountain in north coastal Maine, she now lives (somewhat reluctantly) on the waterfront in Boston and gets back to Maine as often as possible. Her most recent travels have taken her to the Kalahari Desert in Namibia where she spent a week living with a Kalahari Bushman family.