

**Maran Brainard Hilgendorf** | <http://linkedin.com/in/maranhilgendorf>  
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Seasoned communications and grant expert. Executed lean communications programs that engaged and empowered others to fulfill a common mission. Obtained and managed grants, allowing more and improved programs and events to be offered. Created communities of practice, publications, events from trainings to conferences, videos, online outreach using websites to digital newsletters to social media, allowing diverse audiences from the interested public, children, media, scientists, resource managers and policymakers to become better stewards. Responsible for a variety of grant making, administrative and business operations.

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### Select Work Experience

**Publisher** | Peace River Wildlife Center – Punta Gorda, FL | 2017 to present

Educate the public about Florida’s native wildlife and the center’s work by publishing printed calendars featuring donated images.

**Project Manager** | Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County, FL | June 2017 to Dec. 2022

Promote the arts community by publishing 140 biweekly online newsletters and online calendar and blogs; manage annual grants to teachers, and manage membership.

**Grants Manager** | Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida - Fort Myers, FL | Sept. 2018 to Jan. 2022

Secured nearly half of the budget for the mission-based programs. Identify and write grants, securing \$2.5 million – an increase of 50% – and prepare grant reports while improving processes, reporting and filing, and establishing an indirect rate.

**Communications Manager** | Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program - Punta Gorda, FL | Jan. 2000 to Feb. 2017

- Build consensus-based partnerships to protect and restore water resources in seven counties.
- Develop, implement and evaluate strategic communication plans and annual work plans to fulfill management plans. The National Estuary Program is an EPA program that is cooperatively funded.

- Secure funding for outreach initiatives through grants, sponsor support, registration fees, and donations accepted by the Friends of Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization. Served as Executive Director.
- Staff the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) that oversees public outreach. Members represent businesses, agencies, and organizations.
- Represent programs on diverse committees, councils, and nonprofit organizations, often serving as an officer. Prepare and give presentations.
- Coordinate events for diverse audiences and purposes from meetings to:
  - Public events, including annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festivals and conservation landscaping programs.
  - Conferences and workshops, including five multi-day summits, five environmental education programs, five conservation lands programs, 22 trainings and 14 topic-specific workshops.
- Conceive and implement creative ways to reach underserved audiences. Examples include:
  - Engage 18,000 school children each year. Publish nine editions of *Adventures in the Charlotte Harbor Watershed: A Story of Four Animals and Their Neighborhoods*. Seven school districts distribute the 60-page book to teach children about the natural environment of southwest Florida.
  - Reached new audiences. Publish 12 CHNEP calendars of donated entries that depict the beauty of the natural environment of southwest Florida, helping people understand the program and issues of concern. The 2017 calendar was distributed to 34,000.
- Educate and engage the public.
  - Create an engaging website that is a repository. Use social media and digital tools, including Constant Contact, EventBrite and SurveyMonkey, to improve outreach.
  - Supported 850 projects with grants. Manage two grant programs, including developing purposes and the application processes, and managing application and project review.
  - Develop an elearning Citizens Academy.
  - Produce 30+ short videos on subjects of concern, such as seagrasses and conservation landscaping, for broadcast on the local PBS TV station and government access stations and YouTube. Produce and host two hour-long Estuaries Live programs broadcast live on the Internet.
  - Publish 66 issues of quarterly 16-page color magazine, *Harbor Happenings*, for more than 4,000 subscribers and for distribution by nearly 30 partners.

**Director of Marketing and Communications | The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, a nonprofit dedicated to conserving Southwest Florida's natural environment - Naples, FL | March 1998 to February 2000**

- Market the organization and its two nature centers, school and camp programs, boat cruises, field trips, programs, lectures, and other environmental education and policy efforts.
- Cultivate relationships with print and broadcast media. Provide three weekly and two monthly columns to *Naples Daily News*. Provide media and reporters worldwide with story leads about environmental policy, science, wildlife rehabilitation, land acquisition, and education efforts. Local television news featured the organization at least once a week.
- Publish quarterly *Update*, monthly *Eye on the Issues*, both for 5,500 members, and bimonthly newsletter for more than 700 volunteers. *The Update* newsletter was nationally recognized.
- Publish annual reports for members and other documents used to raise funds. Promote various fundraising events.

**Assistant Director | Ohio Sea Grant College Program, The Ohio State University - Columbus, OH | October 1984 to May 1997**

Sea Grant provides university researchers with grants to study the oceans and Great Lakes to better understand, preserve, and use these natural resources. Sea Grant is a program of NOAA that is cooperatively funded. Assumed communications oversight responsibilities for:

1984: F.T. Stone Laboratory, Ohio's Lake Erie Biological Field Station

1992: Great Lakes Aquatic Ecosystem Research Consortium

1994: Forum of Interdisciplinary Research Centers at Ohio State University

- Educate and engage the people who manage, use, and enjoy the Great Lakes, especially Lake Erie, by increasing their understanding to better use and evaluate the development and conservation of this resource.
- Secure funding for research, management and outreach programs. Coordinate grants for Ohio Sea Grant, including proposals, contracts, and reports. From 1990 to 1995, this included two program and ten special initiative omnibus proposals that resulted in the award of \$11.3 million for 40 research projects and ongoing management and outreach programs. Write proposals to fund the communications program. Awarded \$1.1 million for communications proposals from seven special Congressional initiatives to NOAA Sea Grant.
- Develop a comprehensive communications program, obtain funds, manage projects and budgets and supervise communications staff. Develop a communications program for specific issues.

- Obtain funds from other agencies, contracts with the Ohio Lake Erie Office, and the sale of publications.
- Represent programs on university, state, regional and national commissions, and committees.
- Participate in and chair state and regional committees.
- Assist with planning annual Lake Erie conferences, biennial State Legislature and Congressional Days and the first international conference addressing a new aquatic invasive species, the zebra mussel that was harming the environment and private property.
- Educate the public. Publish 80 bimonthly eight-page newsletters *Twine Line*.  
Readership quadrupled, subscription renewals were greater than 90 percent, and more than 90 percent of the subscribers thought the newsletter was excellent. Reporters use as a tip sheet. Subscriptions and contracts covered the printing and mailing expenses.
- Publish 120+ program, classroom, and informational publications.
- Create and publish unique products, including an educational game about the Great Lakes.
- Cultivate and maintain media relations. Provide reporters with story leads, write and distribute media releases. National print coverage included *Time*, *Smithsonian*, and *the American Museum of National History*.
- Collaborate on public relations and public information projects and conferences with other programs, agencies, and associations. For example, chaired three of the annual Lake Erie Conferences and moderated one.
- Publish three reports of research funded as a result of special Congressional initiatives. These reports summarized research and outreach projects funded through 17 Sea Grant programs.
- Serve as chair of the task force that created the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN), an Internet portal/directory of information created by members.
- Publish annual directory and coordinate media releases for 20+ university-based interdisciplinary research centers.

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## Education

**B.S. in journalism** and 45 graduate-level business hours toward MBA (degree is in birth name, Mary Brainard) | Ohio University - Athens, OH

## **Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI)**

**22 courses offered by** NOAA Coastal Services Center Trainings, National Association of Interpreters, North American Association for Environmental Education and others

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## Select volunteer work with nonprofit organizations

- GreenSync, Inc: Founder from July 2017 to present.
- Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves: Vice President from 2018 to present.  
Webmaster from 2018 to 2022.
- National Environmental Education Foundation: Volunteer grant reviewer from 2017 to present.
- Friends of Highlands Hammock State Park: Promoted annual festival. 2023.
- TechSoup Tech4Good-Charlotte County. Hosted 13 programs to create strong, self-sufficient communities of practice where people use technology for social benefit. June 2017 to April 2019.
- Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance and League of Environmental Educators: Created online registration for 6<sup>th</sup> annual research and symposium conference in 2018.
- Florida Native Plant Society: Created digital newsletter in 2018. Produced 2018 conference proceedings.
- Friends of Charlotte Harbor Estuary, Inc.: Executive Director from 2000 to March 2017.
- Society for Ethical Ecotourism (SEE): Board member and Secretary from 2005 to 2011.
- Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium: Board Member and Secretary from 2001 to 2004, also a member of Search and Membership Committees.