

K A R I F . W A T K I N S



Kari Watkins, a third-generation journalist, became the Oklahoma City National Memorial's first staff member as the Communications Director in March 1996. She was named Executive Director in 1999. Today, she oversees the operations of the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum; one of Oklahoma's most visited sites and is Race Director for the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon.

Kari oversaw the design competition of the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial and the building of the Memorial Museum and worked with board and staff to raise \$29 million dollars for construction.

In 2013, Kari recognized the future of museums was changing and the Memorial had to adapt to maintain relevance. As a result, the Memorial began the \$10 million *9:03 Campaign* to update and enhance the existing Museum. Through the next two years, Kari led a team of board, staff, consultants and construction teams to design and build the award-winning Museum that exists today.

As the final project for the *20th Anniversary* of the bombing, the Memorial opened the *Uncover-Discover Lab*, an academically oriented experience geared toward middle and high school students. The Lab integrates STEM concepts with lessons learned from the bombing in a highly interactive environment that stimulates learning and connects the past with the future. Today they are planning for 2020 – 25th Anniversary.

Locally, she has been recognized with several awards including: the 2000 *Women in Communications Byliner Award*, the 2005 *Journal Record Woman of the Year*, the 2006 *Stanley Draper Award for Community Excellence*, the 2011 *University of Oklahoma Gaylord College of Journalism Distinguished Alumni Award*, 2016 *Lee Allan Smith Oklahoma Legacy Award*, and the 2017 *John F. Kennedy Community Service Award*.

Kari leads a staff that has been recognized with the highest national recognition, accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums. Under her leadership, the Memorial Museum has won numerous awards. A few noteworthy ones include: The Videographer Award of Excellence, a Gold American Alliance of Museums MUSE, the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award, and multiple Addy's, PRSA Awards, and Oklahoma Tourism RedBud Awards.

Kari serves on the board of directors for the OKC Convention and Visitors Bureau, the MAPS3 Park Sub-Committee, is on the Board of Visitors for the University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College of Journalism & Mass Communications, is an elder at Crossings Community Church and serves on the Casady Parents' Organization.

She and her husband Hardy, who is the Vice President of Marketing for INTEGRIS Health, have two children, Ford and Caroline.



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