



# Candidate Biographies

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*For the 2019/2020 Women Soaring Pilots Association Board of Directors*

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## **Irit Abramovich**

### *International*

I started to learn flying gliders in 2007 at the Megiddo airfield in Israel. In 2009 I received my private glider pilot license. I regularly fly PW5, LS4 and Grob Twin. My first WSPA seminar was in 2015 and since then I am a member of the organization. I am fully aligned with the WSPA goal to bring more women into this amazing, empowering and fun hobby.

I have been an engineer and project manager in the semiconductor industry for many years. Currently I am in the process of turning my photography hobby into an artistic professional career. As a Board member I would represent the International Region.



## **Christine Covell**

### *Western Region*

My name is Christine Covell and I'm a student Glider Pilot and aviation enthusiast. I'm currently training at Williams Soaring Center in Northern California. I am getting ready to solo soon and look forward to many adventures yet to come. Since I'm new to soaring I look forward to growing my knowledge and sharing what I learn with the members of WSPA. I reside outside of Sacramento with my partner George, whom flies glider aerobatics! We have a rescued greyhound named Rowan, and two adopted cats Goose AKA Nubbins, and Stewie. I'm interested in sharing my interest in soaring with other women with the intent to help support and increase the amount of future women glider pilots.

My skill set includes Microsoft office suite, financial management, analytics, reporting, some website design knowledge and many years of helping organize events with nonprofit groups.



## **Ute Kaden**

### *Western Region*

I am currently an active CFG in Alaska and volunteer as Mission Transport Pilot and Aerospace Educator at the Civil Air Patrol, Alaska Wing. I am employed at the University of Alaska in the School of Education.

When I turned 14, I joined the local glider club in Zwickau, Germany. After a winter of ground school, I had my first glider flight in 1974. From this time on, I spent many weekends and summers at glider ports, got my private glider certificate and flew the Silver C requirements. I completed the training for the CFG on my 21 birthday. I have flown in places like the Alps, New Zealand, and the Wasserkuppe. In 1994 I moved with my family to the U.S. and eventually got my U.S. Commercial License and CFG.

I value the great support WSPA provides for women glider pilots. I am ready to strengthen the organization and represent WSPA members. My goal to promote women's participation in soaring is in keeping with the goals of the Women Soaring Pilots Association.



## **Diana Lauren**

### *Central Region*

I live in Corpus Christi TX. I work full time as a Home Health Physical Therapist. I am a single mom with two children.

I have been a member of the Refugio Soaring Circle for 3 years because my teenage son, now 18 had the strongest desire to learn to fly. I started taking lessons along with him and I passed the written exam August 2017. I make an effort to fly as often as I can, but as you know it rains a lot in S.E. Texas. My goal is to achieve my glider license by August 2019, before the written exam expires.

It is awesome to have an association for women glider pilots. I would love to help out in whatever way seems fitting. I enjoy making connections with people and offering support.



## **Valeria (Val) Paget**

*Central Region*

I always dreamed of flying, but I couldn't make the dream a reality until I was 49 and took my first soaring flight. Now I have over 1,600 hours in gliders plus time flying a '46 Taylorcraft that I helped restore. I have competed in regional and national soaring contests flying my PW5. I set 19 aviation records including two World Records – my first at age 65, proving that soaring is not an age-limited activity. I fly both a Duo Discus and my beloved PW5 in the flatlands and the mountains. As a board member, I would support women pilots as they explore all the aspects of soaring. For 12 years I was Publicity Chairman for the Soaring Society of America. I have written about soaring for many national publications including the AOPA and Soaring Magazine and lectured at national aviation event as well as local gatherings. Like most of you, I use every opportunity to spread the word about the joy of soaring.



## **Irena Raymond**

### *Eastern Region*

I started flying gliders in 1983, at Lesce airfield in Slovenia. I got involved in WSPA in 2009 when being a member of an Organizing Committee of WSPA seminar at Lesce.

Since then I am a member of WSPA and I also served as an International Board member for many years. In 2014 I have achieved my private license for single engine land and also a self-launch sail-plane endorsement. Recently I added a Commercial rating to my European glider pilot license.

Since my new home is Virginia I look forward to the opportunity to serve the WSPA board for the Eastern Region.



## Mary Rust

### *Western Region*



(Current WSPA President)

Mary has been flying gliders 37 years. She holds a Commercial Glider License and a Private Pilot's License in Single Engine Land. She served as a CFI for 20 yrs. She worked for Sailplane Enterprises (an FBO) for 18 yrs. in Hemet, CA, was CFI for Orange County Soaring Association for 17 yrs, and served at Lake Elsinore Soaring Association before retiring from flight instructing. She still gives rides at Lake Elsinore Soaring Club, and continues to fly at WSPA events. Mary also served as the SSA's California State Record keeper for 6 yrs, and she has been on the WSPA Board for 7 years serving as treasurer and president.

Mary joined WSPA in the early 1980's, before the "Women's Soaring Pilots Association" was incorporated in 1986. She has co-directed two WSPA Seminars (1989 – Tehachapi, CA and 1996 – Hemet, CA). Mary loves serving on the WSPA Board of Directors and would like to serve another 2 year term.





## **Elizabeth Tattersall**

### *Western Region*

I want to see WSPA award generous flight scholarships, have fun and successful seminars, and remain a healthy organization. I have attended four WSPA seminars and have made new friends at them. I learned to fly single engine in 2002. I then obtained my glider add-on through Civil Air Patrol, and a few months later I completed my glider Commercial. With the help of a WSPA scholarship I earned CFG and have been instructing at SoaringNV and with Civil Air Patrol for about ten years. I am also a tow pilot and I have winch, auto tow and self launch endorsements. I own a Piper Cherokee (the kind with an engine). In another part of my life I am a Professor of Biology and Chemistry at Western Nevada College and an Episcopal Priest.



## **Catherine Williams**

### *Eastern Region*

I began soaring at the age of 16 in a Schweizer 2-22. I am a Commercial glider pilot and CFI-G. I am the Chief Flight Instructor for the 97 member Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association located in Fairfield PA. I have a Gold Badge and 3 Diamonds. I fly a 1-26 and LS 8-18 cross country and in competition.

Only a few women in the US are on the SSA Pilot Ranking List. The 1-26 Virginia Schweizer Trophy for women often goes unclaimed. The WSPA seminars and competition scholarships have been trying for years to encourage cross country and competitive flying, but with limited success. I truly believe there are women pilots who would love the challenge of a soaring contest.

Having retired from my career as a Nurse Practitioner I now have more time to give back to the sport that has meant so much to me. It would be an honor to serve on the WSPA Board and do what I can help encourage more women to enter soaring competition.