

2021 TWGGA Candidate Bio

Secretary Nominee

Karen Bonarrigo, Messina Hof Estate Winery - Region 3

What are your goals for TWGGA and how do you plan to achieve them?

“Assist the TWGGA organization after a challenging year for both TWGGA and its members to get back on track - 2020 brought unprecedented obstacles for members require intentional efforts in 2021 to assist wineries and growers to re-build their businesses and work together to solve common issues. Use my attention to detail and dedication/passion to the Texas Wine Industry to readjust, organize and improve the effectiveness of TWGGA for its members and the industry as a whole.”

What is your professional experience, wine education/experience/achievements that would prepare you for this position?

Karen Bonarrigo started her journey into the Texas Wine Industry more than fifteen years ago after meeting her (now) husband, Paul M. Bonarrigo. Karen grew up in Pennsylvania and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a minor in History from The George Washington University. During her time at The George Washington University she participated in the selective Elizabeth J. Somers Women’s Leadership Program and worked at The George Washington University Law School as well as Marzulla and Marzulla Law Firm in Washington D.C.

After graduation, Karen worked as a litigation paralegal in North Carolina while Paul served as an Active Duty Officer in the United States Marine Corps. Paul and Karen moved back to Texas in 2010 for Paul to begin the ownership and wine program transition with his parents, Paul V. and Merrill Bonarrigo. Karen transitioned into Messina Hof Winery as the Human Resources Manager in 2010, was promoted to Director of Administration in 2012 and then to Chief Administration Officer in 2018 which she holds today. She currently oversees all of the human resources, accounting, administration, and marketing responsibilities at Messina Hof Wine Cellars, Inc. Karen is active within the hospitality and wine industries at various local and state levels.

She currently serves as the Chairman of Texas Hill Country Wineries’ Marketing Committee and is a member of the Legislative Committee. Karen previously held at various times the positions of Vice-President, President, Past-President, and Chairman of the Legislative Committee of Texas Hill Country Wineries from 2016 through 2019. She also served as the Region 3 Foundation Director for the Texas Wine Foundation (formerly known as the Texas Wine and Grape Growers Foundation) from 2014 through 2020, and she was Secretary/Treasurer on the Board of Experience Bryan-College Station (formerly known as the Bryan-College Station Convention and Visitors Bureau) from 2018 until 2020. Karen holds a Wine and Spirits Education Trust (WSET) Level Two Award in Wine and Spirits and passed with distinction, and she passed the Introductory Level with The Court of Master Sommeliers in 2019. Karen was named a Master Lady of the Vine with the esteemed Brotherhood of the Knights of the Vine in 2017. Overseeing the food and wine pairing and education programs is her personal passion, and she is dedicated to steering Messina Hof toward nationally recognized culinary programs while continuing to expand her education regarding food and wine.

