

WSU News

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Former Wichita State First Lady Deborah Bardo dies

By WSU Strategic Communications

Deborah J. (Davis) Bardo, former first lady of Wichita State University, died April 15, 2022. She was 68 years old.

Mrs. Bardo was married to WSU's 13th president, Dr. John Bardo, for 44 years until his death on March 12, 2019. She is survived by their son, Christopher.

Mrs. Bardo served as Wichita State's first lady from 2012 to 2019. In that role, she especially enjoyed being around students and supporting the many events that brought the community and university together.

In her time at Wichita State, she established the Deborah J. Bardo Scholarship, which provides annual awards to freshmen, with a preference for those who are the children or grandchildren of WSU faculty or staff.

Born in 1953 in Lowell, Massachusetts, Mrs. Bardo moved to Wichita as a child. After graduating from Wichita West High School, she attended Wichita State, where she met Dr. Bardo in 1974 and married in 1975.

Mrs. Bardo earned an associate's degree in secretarial studies, a bachelor's degree in business education, and a master's degree in communication, all from WSU. She also studied anthropology at Southwest Texas State University.

While a student at WSU, she was active in the International Student Club and with her professional honor society. After graduation she worked on campus as a secretary in the Department of Marketing and as an assistant editor for university publications.

With the birth of their son, Mrs. Bardo left the university to become a full-time mom and to support her husband's academic career.

Over the years, she volunteered with the Boy Scouts of America, various schools, Meals on Wheels, and strongly supported public and university libraries.

An avid traveler, Mrs. Bardo collected Fiesta Ware and was known for the intricate doll houses she built and furnished, one of which is part of the Western Carolina University Mountain Heritage Center collection. 🍌