

How did a criminal get on our Board? And what lies were told about Marlene that damaged her reputation? To start with, Earl & Marlene had run the museum successfully since 2000. As the majority of our Board Members were either older or had physical issues that prevented them from doing any heavy lifting/ moving. Both Christopher Gordon & his brother David Gordon had volunteered & helped in many ways in & around the museum. David Gordon, who at that time was an Oneida County Legislator, said he would like to be on the Board. And brought on with a unanimous board vote in favor. Shortly after, David Gordon suggested his brother Christopher Gordon, who said he was a representative of a local construction company, join the Board. He was brought on with a unanimous board vote in favor. Then David Gordon suggested Paul Miscione, who was a member of the New Hartford Town Council. and said he owned his own Insurance Company. The majority of the board voted to bring him on.

A bit later, knowing from Board meeting financials (which were confidential and supposed to stay within the Bd mtgs only) that we were working on Codes, as we got 3 contractor costs to secure the funds. Christopher came into the museum with two other men, whom he told me were also contractors and could go down into our basement to see which part of our Sprinkler System, which worked for visitors safety, needed to be upgraded. While Christopher & I sat at the kitchen table, unbeknownst to me, they took the elevator to the other floors. They came back into the kitchen and Christopher said he would get back to me with the price. (they never did)

The Truth. Then, in the spring of 2014, when Exec. Director Marlene Brown discovered Christopher Gordon had disgusting and unsuitable material on his Facebook page, she called him into her office for a private meeting and told him he had to take that material off (as if wasn't suitable for a children's museum). He refused, saying he had a right to put whatever he wanted on his Social Media pages and stormed out of my office, loudly hurling curse words and threats from my then open office door, heard by Visitors & the Museum Front Office staff! That's when the following started.

The lies that hurt us: Gordon immediately went to the media. The Utica OD reported April 11, 2014, *"The board has split into two factions, each with its own chair, each holding its own meetings & challenging the notion that the other can exert any control. One faction, headed by Chris Gordon, has suspended Brown and moved to obtain control over museum bank accounts and financial records. That was rejected by the banks because of the confusion, Gordon said"*.

The Truth. Christopher Gordon was never elected Museum Board Chair & told the local OD his supposed Board was made up of himself, Christopher Gordon, his brother, Dave Gordon, Paul Miscione & Deanna DiNardo (all of that was also proven untrue in court). He created a bogus letterhead, listing himself as Board Chair, took it to our museum banks and got our accounts frozen! He also took it to our sponsors, the Community Foundation, the Utica Fire Dept. & the District Attorney! Celia Domser, the official museum Board Chair, told the OD she fully supported Brown, saying "When I think of all that has been done since she has been there, it would've closed a long time ago if it weren't for her." Domser said she wants to restore control of the finances to Brown, whom she fully supports.

More lies The following was reported in the Utica OD on April 13, 2014, *"A small group of members of the Children's Museum Board of Directors have suspended Executive Director Marlene Brown. Gordon has made allegations about possible financial improprieties. Brown has adamantly denied the accusations. Sunday, Gordon called a meeting of the board. He said three of the board's nine members showed up: Gordon, his brother David Gordon and Paul Miscione. Miscione had been a Children's Museum board member for about three weeks. He said, however, that he is concerned that the museum's finances are not being properly managed. Under the museum's bylaws, a board quorum is one third of the total number. The bogus Board assigned David Gordon and Deanna DiNardo as the new signers on the museum's bank accounts. Brown says Gordon's meeting was illegal and that he never was chairman and has been formally removed from the board. Brown said she is not suspended and accused the leader of the group, Christopher Gordon, of "committing fraud. Chris is trying to get the building," she said. "He is*

trying to get us out...get the keys, and if he does, he will ransack it or sell it.” NOTE: all Gordon’s accusations were later proven untrue. But after a stellar career, and 15 years of running the museum, it broke my heart to read these lies.

The Truth. A March, 2014, OD article said, “the Children’s Museum Board of Directors gave a 60% share of its building to museum Director Marlene Brown. Brown said she took on the building in an effort to save the museum from developers who were eying it. Its Bagg’s Square location is viewed widely as ripe for such endeavors. Brown said she was awarded the controlling share of the museum’s property by a unanimous vote of her board in an effort to save it from developers. Her story is corroborated by then-Board of Directors Chairman John Nogas. Brown supplied a 2011 letter, signed by Nogas, in which Nogas states that Brown is being awarded the share in lieu of then \$250,000 in back pay. Brown said she has not collected a paycheck from the museum for many years and has spent her own money on items for the museum. “We could eventually form an LLC, the building could be a spin-off into a trust that would be deed restricted, couldn’t be sold for commercial purposes & would stay a museum in perpetuity,” the letter states. The LLC was never carried through to conclusion so no taxes were needed to pay on it.

Codes: While Marlene & Earl had been working each year on various Codes issues, because of the bad press Gordon kept relaying (to all media, the Fire Dept. and the OC District Attorney’s office), officials came into the building to view what Gordon said was wrong. The Board decided they would close the building for a few months and bring it fully up to code, which they did (code was changed in 2008 by the state & the municipality didn't promote it or inform our Board, as they said in an OD article, they didn't have the manpower to do so). While it damaged both hers & the museum's reputations, Marlene survived numerous falsified lies told about her. including possible financial improprieties by Gordon which were published by the paper, on TV & on a radio station. (They all were later proved false by the D.A.)

Our Atty’s Advice: The Board had to hire an attorney to prove Gordon was rightfully removed from the Board, and I had to hire a separate attorney as mine was a supposed criminal charge! While it was an ongoing case, our Attorney's told us we couldn't talk to anyone about it, so because we couldn't share our truthful side, the media (written & air, especially a reporter from Utica's largest newspaper) kept publishing and airing articles from lies Gordon kept sending her. It was a year-long fight & costly with attorney's fees, but in the end we were found innocent of all charges!

D. A. Finds Brown Innocent Feb. 11, 2015 an OD article declared “Oneida County District Attorney released the results of a months long investigation into how the museum handled its finances”. “The investigation into the Children’s Museum has been completed and based on our findings, I do not see any viable charges that we can pursue before a grand jury,” DA Scott McNamara write in a release about the report. McNamara said the investigation involved a “lengthy review of each and every banking transaction” of the Children’s Museum over the past five years. “While our investigation revealed that there may have been some issues with record keeping, we confirmed that the expenditures from the numerous bank accounts were in fact made on behalf of the museum”, McNamara’s report said. Museum Board Chairwoman Celia Domser said she was not surprised by McNamara’s findings, especially since Brown had put some of her own money into running the museum over the years. “We knew all along that’s what the outcome would be,” Domser said. “None of us had any doubt Marlene would be exonerated.” The Board was always aware of finances.

State Supreme Court Justice Rules for Museum Feb. 18, 2015 Utica OD: “State Supreme Court Justice Samuel Hester ruled Wednesday that Gordon was properly removed for ‘conduct unbecoming.’ (Gordon & his attorney, Linda Sullivan Fatata, failed to show up for a state Supreme Court hearing). Justice Samuel Hester ruled that Gordon was properly removed from the board”. Gordon could not be located by address or phone. Museum Board Chairwoman Celia Domser continues to support Brown. “Marlene Brown kept the museum open for 15 years, and she took lots of money out of her own pocket to pay for this, that the other thing,” Domser said. “She deserves to go out – when she does – with all due respect, because that museum would have gone away 15 years ago but it stayed open because of her.

However, Domser had already hired another person to take Marlene's place, months back, although at that time, Marlene knew nothing about it, and wasn't planning on leaving the museum.

Our recommendations: While I & my Board should have done so, VET THOROUGHLY all Board Members brought on, all employees & volunteers. I wish the Media & all those who were so eager to believe his charming lies, had also vetted him. They'd have found everything he was eventually arrested for! Gordon caused us such grief that, even after he was found guilty & we were exonerated, it drained me. In April, we retired, to spend more time with family.

The Board's Movement: Marlene was asked to not come into the museum while the contractors were working on the Codes. Then a couple of members of the Board treated Marlene unprofessionally at Board meetings so it would look as though all the responsibility for what had happened was entirely hers and not equally the Board's fault. In Feb. 2015, Board members interviewed another person for the Executive Director position, without Marlene's knowledge. Shortly after, Marlene stopped coming into the museum and Marlene decided to resign to spend more time with her family. Celia & Mary wrote a nicely worded letter of resignation to media. People have sent me emails and told me things had been taken down, some donated (which took weeks to assemble), some purchased by Marlene.

On May 15, 2015, the Board honored Marlene by awarding her the prestigious title of "Executive Director Emeritus" for her 15 years of service to the museum at an event attended by the Board, sponsors & friends, Utica Mayor Rob Palmieri & former Congressman Sherry Boehlert. View event on our museum website:

<http://www.museum4kids.net> * Then make sure to read the Breaking News below!



Breaking News: the former Board Member who caused us such unbelievable grief, hurt our reputation, wrote false letters to several pretending to be us, caused us to lose almost a year's income, finally got bit by Karma! He was found and arrested for several counts of Grand Larceny for what he did to a number of other persons and businesses!

View documents here: <http://www.museum4kids.net/AboutUs.htm>

View WKTU article here:

http://www.wktv.com/news/Ilion_man_charged_with_grand_larceny_impersonation_following_contractor_fraud_investigation.html



View Oneida County District Attorney's Office Press Release here:

On May 17, 2016 Christopher J. Gordon, 36, of Utica was sentenced to two consecutive terms of 1 1/3 to 4 years in State Prison (total of 2 2/3 to 8 years), a \$5,000.00 fine and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$10, 150.54....

Mr. Gordon was convicted, after trial on March 16, 2016, of two counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, and one count of Criminal Impersonation in the Second Degree. The conviction stems from incidents that occurred in January and February of 2015 when Mr. Gordon presented himself as a representative of a local construction company and received payment to do renovations for a local business.

In order to persuade the business to hire and pay him, Mr. Gordon made several misrepresentations. Specifically, he presented a forged Certificate of Liability Insurance indicating that he possessed worker's compensation and commercial liability insurance and provided the victim with a forged invoice from a building supply company as proof of payment for supplies he claimed to have purchased for the renovation.

(Gordon is currently in jail)