



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on October 11, 2022

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## Ordinary Citizens, Extraordinary Americans

"Politicians fear them; statesmen love them," said Robert Owens, midwest regional field director for The John Birch Society. He had called to arrange a meeting to introduce me to two activists, describing them as political dynamos in America's grassroots war to defend our constitutional Republic against its Deep State enemies.

"They are two ladies — both widows — one from Ohio and the other from Michigan," he continued, explaining that they and their late husbands founded or expanded organizations that have grown into statewide powerhouses by remaining above partisan politics and focusing on a return to constitutional principles. We set a date for our video conference call, and I eagerly awaited meeting these Amazons.

Imagine my surprise when I logged in to see two sweetly smiling faces who radiated a gentle, magnetic compassion rather than the air of fierce warriors. Yet a few minutes into our conversation, it was clear that Robert was right about them. Beneath their modest exteriors beat the hearts of die-hard crusaders. These ladies are the type who, through perseverance and selfless diligence, exemplify true heroes in the perennial defense of American values. They are a lesson to each of us that you do not have to be great in the eyes of the world to do great things.

### Their Backgrounds

Though today each boasts an impressive *curriculum vitae* of conservative involvement, neither Linda Wildern of Michigan nor Lisa Woods of Ohio started life expecting to become political activists. Their husbands first got involved in Americanist causes years ago, and their wives became partners in that activism.

Linda's husband, attorney Bill Wildern, served Michigan's Hillsdale College "in philanthropic outreach for many years," writes Sarah Chavey in a 2016 tribute entitled "Remembering William Wildern III: A Man of 'God, Family, Country,'" posted on the school's website. She quoted friends and family who recalled his graciousness, humility, integrity, and compassion, as well as his "quick wit" and enthusiasm for "politics, free market and conservative values." A veteran of the U.S. Navy, he liked to hand out two-dollar bills because they bear an image of the Founding Fathers signing the Declaration of Independence.



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Linda Wildern

Jim Woods, Lisa's husband, was likewise admired for his patriotism and "selfless animating purpose: to live free, to promote accountability and to preserve authentic self-government," reads his 2014 obituary. A Marine who served in the mid-1960s, he later campaigned for Ronald Reagan and became active in Georgia's Republican Party. He was elected to several positions, including a two-year term as a Georgia state representative, when he received "100 percent scores from the Christian Coalition as well as the National Federation of Independent Businessmen."

Both gentlemen met death sooner than either of their wives expected, but these ladies continue their work unabated and undeterred.

## **MCFAN**

Lisa Woods leads the nonpartisan Medina County Friends and Neighbors, a group she and Jim founded in 2008. Known as MCFAN, it's a grassroots organization that promotes liberty, limited government, and free enterprise. Lisa describes it as both social and educational, for it mobilizes people from different backgrounds, teaching them the importance of constitutional limitations on government.

Today the organization boasts more than one thousand members, and Lisa says that it has served as an incubator for similar groups in surrounding counties. That's particularly impressive considering MCFAN's informal structure. There are no officers or board of directors — not even a website.

"Our mission is to build a coalition of conservative grassroots support in Medina County in order to preserve and promote the Constitution, the free enterprise economy, and traditional American values," states a post on MCFAN's Facebook page. Lisa uses that outlet to announce the group's twice-monthly meetings, which feature speakers including local, state, and federal officials, candidates, and conservative spokesmen.



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Lisa Woods

That biweekly schedule has remained intact for 14 years, from relatively humble beginnings. The Woodses had moved in 2003 from Georgia, where they had been active in the Republican Party. “It was kind of a buzz kill to come to Ohio,” she remembers, since the organization had “dwindled down to a women’s group that met once a month.” Realizing they were the only ones around to fill the vacuum, the Woodses decided to capitalize on the excitement surrounding the 2008 presidential election.

“We were only going to have a couple of meetings, and then we were going to funnel [attendees] to the Republican Party,” Linda said. But the groundswell of support was more than either of them anticipated. “And here we are 14 years later,” when the local Republican Party takes its cues from MCFAN.

In fact, Lisa ran for the Ohio State House in 2016, losing a three-way Republican primary by only 107 votes. The same year, on the prompting of friends, she set her sights on the state school board that fall. “It was 10 days before the deadline to get your name on the ballot,” she recalls. “I had coffee with a couple of people, and they asked me to run. I said, ‘You’ve got to be kidding me! I cannot be the best you have to run for this position!’” But they convinced her, and sure enough, she beat the Democratic incumbent with 68 percent of the vote on a budget that was less than 10 percent that of her opponent’s.

Having earned her stripes as a home-schooling mother of five, Lisa was indeed the right person for the job. She represented more than one million constituents on Ohio’s Board of Education from 2017 until 2020. A vehement opponent of critical race theory, she traveled the state testifying against it in legislative, bureaucratic, and school-district venues.

Since then, she has remained active in education-related causes such as the BEST Program (Building Education for Students Together), a project of the libertarian organization FreedomWorks. Lisa is also active with Moms for Liberty, a nationwide group dedicated to defending parental rights.

At the local level, she helped found the Buckeye School District’s ABC Program (Advocates for Buckeye Community), a watchdog over curricula in local schools. An avid firearms enthusiast, she encourages parents, teachers, and school administrators to receive training from the Buckeye Firearms Association FASTER Program (Faculty/Administrator Safety Training & Response). The latter provides instruction about how to respond to active-shooter situations.



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I asked her how she keeps up with involvement in so many organizations, and she pointed out the importance of the overlap to MCFAN. “We’re working on the local, state and federal levels. Often it’s hard to find bridges between those. People tend to be in their own silos. But what happens on the state level takes about a year to come down to the district level, and people are so busy with their districts that they don’t have time to watch the state level. Then we’ve got the federal level going.” She hopes to bridge those gaps and mobilize people who otherwise do not know what to do or where to start. “The average person who’s busy working, who might not be politically involved like we are, still needs to understand what’s coming down the pike.”

## Michigan Conservative Union



**Freedom fighter:** Linda Wildern, chair of the Michigan Conservative Union, is leading the charge to defend constitutionally protected freedoms in her home state.

Linda Wildern used to be one such novice on the political scene. But years ago, she and her husband became involved with the Michigan Conservative Union, the state’s “oldest and largest effective grassroots conservative organization,” according to its website. MCU was founded in 1975 by conservative stalwart Norm Hughes, who directed Ronald Reagan’s presidential campaign in Michigan and served as an aide during his administration. The group led the charge in passing Michigan’s union-busting right-to-work laws, and champions causes across “the full perspective of the conservative movement.”

“I have been trained by the best of the best,” Linda says in fond remembrance of Hughes, who passed away in 2019. “And I got involved on his board 15 years ago.” Over time she moved up in the organization, and Hughes hand-picked her as his successor. But she balked. “I said, ‘Absolutely not!’ This guy was a legislative guru, and I came from a medical background,” she remarked, not considering herself good enough to fill his shoes. Hughes pressed, however, promising to support her by remaining involved. On that condition, she stepped into chairmanship of MCU.



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Unfortunately, Hughes died four months later, and Linda, who had lost her husband in 2016, was now left without her mentor as well. “The first year I had to straighten a lot of things out, and I learned along the way,” she said, noting that the challenge has been a godsend “at this point in my life,” proving her own strength. “I was able to hold it together by a thread, and now we are ready to really go forward and even be more forceful in the field of conservative governance.”

MCU’s current principal focus is blocking an Article V Convention that could rewrite the U.S. Constitution and overthrow our government. “This year we have added joint geographic meetings with legislators and constituents,” Linda told me. These meetings serve as a forum to broadcast voting records of elected officials and keep them in line. MCU also partners with Cleta Mitchell’s Election Integrity Network, training members in grassroots precinct work and gathering signatures to request a forensic audit of the 2020 election in Michigan.

Linda is well acquainted with elections, having served both as a GOP executive committee member in Lenawee County and as a state committee woman for six years prior to her chairmanship of MCU. I asked why she has shifted focus from the Republican Party. “I believe more strongly in what we’re doing with MCU than I do sometimes in the GOP,” she explained. “I don’t always feel that the GOP speaks the truth; we just don’t get the right answers.”

## **Their Advice**

For the right answers, Lisa and Linda both told me, they look to The John Birch Society and *The New American* magazine. “You have to be careful who you go to first and foremost,” warned Lisa, “and I find that The John Birch Society has the best intelligence for what I need to know.”

Linda agrees. “The literature is fantastic,” she said, noting that *The New American* is an “absolutely outstanding” tool in her endeavors to educate MCU’s members and the public about the freedoms that are quickly slipping away if more people do not step up and play a part.

“Just take that first step,” Lisa urges the reluctant. “Don’t ever think that you’re not good enough to do good things. Get involved in any manner that’s possible, and enjoy it, because it can be a lot of fun.”

“In the time of danger, doing nothing is the biggest sin” anyone can commit, says Linda. “So do something! If you’re not comfortable with fighting the politics, just be there as a decent person who wants to make a difference. Please get involved, because our country is definitely in danger.”





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