

## **Profile**

Marie Duncan Otto

Fill Your Bucket List Foundation: Executive Director

Growing up in Cary, North Carolina, Marie Duncan Otto never thought she would become involved with an organization so close to home, and so close to her heart.

Marie graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2004, with a BS in Business Administration and a BA in Romance Languages, specializing in French. After graduating, she held a variety of different positions including: the director of operations at a software startup, the client program manager at a large corporate law firm, and the marketing program manager at the North Carolina Department of Commerce. Marie became involved with Fill Your Bucket List Foundation in 2015.

“I joined Fill Your Bucket List Foundation because I wanted my work to make an impact in a different way,” said Marie. “This role gives me the opportunity to serve people each and every day.”

The founder of Fill Your Bucket List Foundation, Peggy Gibson Carroll, was the individual who first introduced her to the organization. Peggy was always someone who inspired Marie, so she knew she wanted to be a part of Fill Your Bucket List Foundation when it was established. Marie volunteered with a number of the foundation’s early wishes and events. She attended Bucket Bash 2015 and fell even more in love with the foundation. Marie decided this was the type of work she wanted to do, and by the end of 2015 she was hired as the organization’s first employee.

Currently, Marie serves as the foundation’s executive director. This means she is responsible for managing the daily activities that help the foundation run efficiently. She also works closely with the Board of Directors to organize strategies and make sure everything is running as planned. On any given day Marie is working on fundraising and donor/sponsor

engagements, marketing efforts, volunteer management or strategic partner management. She is also in charge of the organization's finances, licenses, renewals and additional company infrastructure.

On top of those responsibilities, Marie organizes the "wish creator" volunteers, who review and select wishes, plan the wish and budget, and make the wish a reality. As Fill Your Bucket List Foundation's only official employee, Marie is in charge of almost all aspects of the foundation.

"I am fortunate to see good in people each and every day. Unfortunately, there is almost no one who has not been affected by cancer in some way. BUT, this means our mission speaks to many, and I love connecting people so they can give back in a meaningful way. My heart is fulfilled much differently than in my prior work," she said.

Marie said that her time at Fill Your Bucket List Foundation has been the most rewarding and amazing experience of her career. She is constantly surrounded by love and passion and knows that her work is directly benefitting individuals who are struggling. This job has reminded Marie of the blessings in her life, and to always focus on what is important because life can change so quickly.

One of Marie's favorite memories from her time with the foundation took place at Bucket Bash 2018. Nicole (Wish #26) and Karon (Wish #36) were two wish recipients who are battling colon cancer. They met at Bucket Bash 2017 and became instant friends. They stayed in touch, but Bucket Bash 2018 was the first time they had seen each other since the previous year. Marie said Karon gave Nicole the biggest hug when they saw each other and there was not a dry eye in the room. Moments like that are the reason Marie's position at the organization is so special and fulfilling.

Not only has Fill Your Bucket List Foundation positively benefited Marie's life, but it has also provided her with a plethora of business experience. With the foundation being a "lean operation", she is able to interact with new and exciting opportunities every day. This gives her the chance to assess and work with a wide variety of different initiatives and programs. The foundation continuously updates resources and improves processes, so it can be more efficient and successful in the future.

Fill Your Bucket List Foundation is an incredible organization with remarkable staff and volunteers. Marie Duncan Otto is one of the individuals who makes everything this foundation does a reality.