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## CHRISTOPHER GARDNER Biography

Christopher Gardner is the owner and CEO of Gardner Rich LLC with offices in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. Conquering grave challenges to become a successful entrepreneur, Gardner is an avid motivational and aspirational speaker, addressing the keys to overcoming obstacles and breaking cycles. Gardner is also a passionate philanthropist whose work has been recognized by many esteemed organizations.

The amazing story of Gardner's life was published as an autobiography, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, (Amistad/Harper Collins) in May 2006, and became a *New York Times* and *Washington Post* #1 bestseller. In paperback, the book spent over twenty weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list and has been translated into fourteen languages. Gardner was also the inspiration for the movie "The Pursuit of Happyness," released by Columbia Pictures in December 2006. The movie is the #2 all-time domestic grossing drama. Will Smith starred as Gardner and received Academy Award, Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild nominations for his performance. Gardner was an associate producer on the film.

Gardner's second book, *Start Where You Are: Life Lessons in Getting From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be* will be published on May 12, 2009.

Born February 9, 1954 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Christopher Paul Gardner's childhood was marked by poverty, domestic violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse and family illiteracy. Gardner published his autobiography out of a desire to shed light on these universal issues and show they do not have to define you. Gardner never knew his father, and lived with his beloved mother, Bettye Jean Triplett (nee Gardner), when not in foster homes. Gardner is indebted to Bettye Jean for his success as she provided him with strong "spiritual genetics" and taught him that in spite of where he came from, he could chart another path and attain whatever goals he set for himself.

Gardner joined the Navy out of high school and then moved to San Francisco where he worked as a medical research associate and for a scientific medical supply distributor. In 1981, as a new father to son Christopher Gardner Jr., he was determined to find a career that would be both lucrative and fulfilling. Fascinated by finance, but without connections, an MBA or even a college degree, Gardner applied for training programs at brokerages, willing to live on next to nothing while he learned a new trade. Chris Jr.'s mother left and Gardner, despite his circumstances, fought to keep his son because, as he says, "I made up my mind as a young kid that when I had children they were going to know who their father is, and that he isn't going anywhere."

Gardner earned a spot in the Dean Witter Reynolds training program but became homeless when he could not make ends meet on his meager trainee salary. Today, Gardner is involved with homelessness initiatives assisting families to stay intact, and assisting homeless men and women who are employed but still cannot get by. It is estimated that 12% of the homeless population in the United States is employed; in some communities that estimate is as high as 30%.

Gardner worked at Bear Stearns & Co from 1983-1987 where he became a top earner. In 1987 he founded the brokerage firm Gardner Rich in Chicago from his home with just \$10,000. Gardner Rich LLC is an institutional brokerage firm specializing in the execution of debt, equity and derivative products transactions for some of the nations largest institutions, public pension plans and unions.

Dedicated to improving the well-being of children through positive paternal involvement, Gardner is a board member of the National Fatherhood Initiative, and received the group's Father of the Year Award in 2002. He serves on the board of the National Education Foundation and sponsors two annual awards: the National Education Association's National Educational Support Personnel Award and the American Federation of Teachers' Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) Award. He also serves on the board of the International Rescue Committee, which works to provide access to safety, sanctuary, and sustainable change for millions of people whose lives have been shattered by violence and oppression. Gardner is still very committed to Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, where he and his son received assistance in the early 1980's. He has helped fund a project that creates low-income housing and opportunities for employment in the notoriously poor Tenderloin area of the city.

Gardner has also been honored by the NAACP Image Awards with awards for both the book and movie versions of *The Pursuit of Happyness*; Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women's (LACAAW) 2006 Humanitarian Award; The Continental Africa Chamber of Commerce's 2006 Friends of Africa Award; The Glaucoma Foundation's Kitty Carlisle Hart Lifetime Achievement Award; The Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA); Covenant House, Common Ground and other organizations committed to combating violence against women, homelessness, and financial illiteracy; issues of the utmost importance to Gardner.

Chris Gardner's aim, through his speaking engagements and media projects, is to help others achieve their full potential. His practical guidance and inspirational story have made him a frequent guest on CNN, CNBC and the Fox News Channel. He has been featured on "The CBS Evening News," "20/20," "Oprah," "Today Show," "The View," "Entertainment Tonight," as well as in *People*, *USA Today*, *Associated Press*, *New York Times*, *Fortune*, *Entrepreneur*, *Jet*, *Reader's Digest*, *Trader Monthly*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The New York Post* and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, amongst others.

Gardner has two children and resides in Chicago and New York.

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