Lisa L. Harkness

First Counselor, Primary General Presidency

Lisa L. Harkness has always had a love of learning and the world around her, something she picked up from her parents. She has studied political science and even learned how to handle reptiles while working at the Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum during her time at Brigham Young University—including the snakes.

"They have personalities, believe it or not," she said. "There's one that knew me every time I would hold him." Howard, a red-tailed boa constrictor, would crawl up her shoulder, curl around her neck, and rest his head on hers while she taught groups that had come to the museum.

Nowadays, she can still pick up and identify a variety of snakes—as long as they don't hiss at her.

Sister Harkness was born in Los Angeles, California, USA, to Ronald and LaRae Long on January 13, 1965. The oldest of five children, she and her family were "always up for adventures, being outside, and exploring the world." She said that because she could always ask her parents questions, "I totally believed and trusted that I could go to Heavenly Father and get answers."

After serving a Spanish-speaking mission in the Louisiana Baton Rouge Mission, Sister Harkness graduated from BYU with a bachelor of science degree in political science and secondary teaching. She married David S. Harkness on April 22, 1988, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have five children and two grandchildren.

Sister Harkness—who was named as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency on March 31, 2018—has also served as a Primary general board member, stake Young Women president, ward Relief Society president, counselor in a ward Young Women presidency, Mia Maid adviser, Young Women camp director, stake family history director, ward family history consultant, and Gospel Doctrine teacher.

She has also volunteered with her local parent-teacher association, community council, the Utah Symphony, and with the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival, as well as with her local government in various positions. ∎