

# Christopher Gardner

CEO, Gardner Rich LLC / Inspiration Behind *The Pursuit Of Happiness*

A self-made success story, Christopher Gardner overcame a lack of college and business school degrees, but most astonishing, homelessness to become the CEO of Gardner Rich LLC, an institutional brokerage firm specializing in the execution of debt, equity and derivative products transactions. His story was brought to the big screen in the hit film *The Pursuit of Happiness*, starring Academy Award-nominee Will Smith as Gardner. His autobiography of the same name also became a *New York Times* #1 bestseller.

Always hard working and tenacious, in the early 1980s, Gardner became homeless in San Francisco and the sole guardian of his toddler son. Unwilling to give up Chris Jr. or his dream of financial independence, Gardner started at the very bottom of the financial industry ladder and pulled his way up to eventually work for Dean Witter Reynolds and Bear Stearns & Co before founding his own company.

Continuously giving back to the communities where he conducts business because he has never forgotten his humble beginnings or the odds he has surmounted, Gardner reaches out to many programs serving the homeless, donating time, assistance, and funds. Foremost among these are the Glide United Methodist Church in San Francisco and The Cara Program in Chicago. He also serves as a board member of the National Fatherhood Initiative, whose mission is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible, and committed fathers. Gardner was the recipient of the group's Father of the Year Award in 2002.

In addition to the father of the Year Award, Gardner has also been honored by the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women with the 25th Annual Humanitarian Award, and by the Continental Africa Chamber of Commerce with the 2006 Friends of Africa Award.

Gardner's remarkable story of struggle, faith, entrepreneurialism, and fatherly devotion and his inspiring message on how to break the cycles that hold you back, has catapulted him beyond the notoriety he has found on Wall Street. He has been featured on the *Evening News with Dan Rather*, *20/20*, *The View*, CNN, and CNBC as well as being the subject of profiles in *USA Today*, The Associated Press, *Fortune*, *Jet* and numerous other local and national newspapers and magazines.