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Public Service Lured Malone Away From Extension Service

Retiree Spotlight

*Dena Malone
Wanda O'Neal*

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Dena Malone ran for office while she was the administrative support supervisor for the Van Buren County Extension office.

She won in November 2012 and retired from Extension in January 2013 to assume the role of recorder/treasurer for the city of Clinton. Malone had served in the same Extension position for nearly 19 years, and while it was difficult to leave her friends behind, she knew she would see them around town.

Malone fully enjoys her elected role for some of the same reasons she loved working for Extension: dealing first-hand with the public, helping people with problems and accounting.

"Yes, some people complain," she said, "but most people just appreciate that you're helping them out."

Malone said she doesn't quite know what led her to vie for the recorder/treasurer office. She said the woman who had the post before her retired, and the position was filled by an appointee. She ran against the appointee and won, much to her delight.

Malone said she was born in Leslie and has lived most of her life in Clinton. She has a love for the people in the area.

"I miss many parts of Extension," she said, "but I love my job now."



Dena Malone

While at Extension, Malone especially enjoyed working with students in the 4-H program. She was a 4-H leader at one time during her Extension stint and still calls them "my 4-H kids." Malone often runs into some of them around Clinton. But they are grown now and many have their own children, she said.

She continues to volunteer at the Van Buren County Fair and has kept up her Master Gardener status. Malone is also a member and district director for Arkansas City Clerks, Recorders, and Treasurers Association.

She and her husband of 21 years, Mark, are members of the Choctaw Church of Christ. They have a large vegetable garden every year, and they always give away quite a bit of extra produce to friends. Malone also likes to work with flowers out in her yard.

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Part-Time and Volunteer Jobs Keep O'Neal Busy

Wanda O'Neal worked as an Extension administrative support supervisor in Pike County for 34 years and has enough good memories and funny stories to fill a book.

O'Neal recalls one Halloween when they had a young 4-H program assistant working in the office and the assistant dressed up like a witch. When the young UPS man came in to deliver a package to the Extension office, the assistant slipped out another door and got on his truck, which was parked in front of the office.

"He almost flipped out when he got on the truck and she jumped out," O'Neal said. "He couldn't get out of the truck fast enough. It was so funny."

O'Neal said the people in her office were always a tight-knit group, and this mom of two sons enjoyed the flexibility the job allowed her family, too. She still stays in close contact with the folks she worked with at Extension before retiring in 2010. She also attends activities in both Pike and Howard counties.

These days O'Neal fills in for the secretaries at the mayor's office and county circuit judge



Wanda O'Neal

in Murfreesboro on occasion and enjoys seeing many of the people she came in contact with at Extension.

She's enjoying her retirement and loves to travel. She and her middle sister take a cruise every year, and she goes on various smaller hops with her sister. O'Neal and her husband like to camp and just spent some time at Maumelle State Park at the end of October. Most of their camping time is spent at Lake Greeson, which is close to home.

O'Neal is also active at her church, United Methodist in Murfreesboro. She sings in

the choir, is a substitute pianist and helps out with the church's mission house. She also helps cook and prepare an Advent feast, which her church donates to the whole town. Everyone is invited to attend.

O'Neal helps deliver Meals on Wheels through the local CADC Senior Center. She's also a charter member of the Junior Auxiliary and helps that organization with various projects throughout the year.

She has two grandchildren who keep her happily busy. She has a granddaughter in Fort Smith, and O'Neal loves taking her shopping and out to eat. Her grandson lives just down the road now that her son, Jay, just built a new house there.

One thing O'Neal doesn't do is spend time on technology. "I said when I retired I would not be married to a computer or a phone and I have kept that promise to myself," she said.

To reconnect with Wanda O'Neal, contact her at 870-845-3192, cell 870-451-1240, P. O. Box 719, Murfreesboro, Ark. 71958, wandaoneal48@yahoo.com.

– Shannon Magsam

Malone (cont. from page 1)

Malone loves visiting the beach and plans to dip her toes in the ocean in the near future. She hasn't been able to go for the past two summers because

she was busy learning her new job, but she's shooting for a beach trip soon.

To reconnect with Dena Malone, contact her at

501-745-8110, 1414 Highway 65 South 137, Clinton, Ark. 72031, dena.r.malone@gmail.com.

– Shannon Magsam

Honorary and Memorial Gifts

The following honorary and memorial gifts were received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service. This list covers honorary and memorial gifts deposited October 1-31, 2014.

Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship

In memory of LaVerne Feaster
Donna Graham

Honorary or memorial donations may be forwarded to the Development Office, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, Ark. 72204. To ensure that proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification.



Becky O'Neal Mulhollen, Dec. 1	Charles Hodges, Dec. 15
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Donna Graham, Dec. 14	Betty Jean Brannan, Dec. 29
Jerry Markham, Dec. 14	Thomas Leslie, Dec. 29
	Gordon Barnes, Dec. 31

From the Editorial Board

Arkansans have come to depend on Extension for more than 100 years, and we were reminded last month just how much our neighbors rely on us.

In the pre-dawn hours of Oct. 7, a strong storm with high winds and golfball-sized hail shredded thousands of acres of cotton and soybeans in Mississippi and Craighead counties. Within three hours, Extension was at work. Ray Benson, staff chair, and Jason Osborn, agriculture agent, Mississippi County; Branon Thiesse, staff chair, and Eric Grant, agriculture agent, Craighead County; and Bill Robertson, cotton agronomist, were on-site evaluating the damage and sending photos and reports back to the state office.

Elected officials organized a public meeting that weekend to help stakeholders take stock of the situation, with organizers looking to Extension to provide the expertise. Local elected officials urged farmers to report their damage to both the Farm Service Agency and Extension. At that meeting, stakeholders, farmers and others made it a point to say how they appreciated and depended upon the Extension Service.

Sixteen days later, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack declared a disaster for the two counties, making affected growers eligible for loans.

While this was a very public effort on the part of many, there is much that Extension does behind the scenes and is seen only by a handful of people.

As Ray Benson said in the days after the storm: "I am continually amazed at the teamwork displayed by the people in our organization. If the people in this state only knew of the efforts on their behalf they would absolutely be blown away."

Your editorial board

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