

Wilton principal retires after 18 years

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FRANKLINTON - After thirty years with Granville County Schools, over half of them as Principal of Wilton Elementary, Wanda B. McGhee is retiring.

A Granville County native, McGhee was born Wanda Braswell on Cannady Mill Road just a few miles from Wilton. With two older brothers and loving parents as strong role models, McGhee says life was always family-oriented and there were often lots of children around.

McGhee never strayed far from her roots, attending Hawley Middle School, South Granville High School, and then North Carolina A&T College in Greensboro. She began her career teaching eighth-grade Language Arts at Hawley Middle School. After eight years, she moved into one of the first Director of Instruction positions in Granville County and worked with both Hawley and South Granville. After a year's time, she was promoted to Assistant Principal at West Oxford Elementary where she stayed for three years. Administration seemed to suit McGhee, and once she came to Wilton, she never left.

"I've been here forever," McGhee says, "but every day is different. I've seen students come and go. Some come back to teach. One of the most rewarding things is to see some of the students I taught at Hawley come back into my life as parents of their own children at Wilton."

McGhee enjoyed being in the classroom as it gave her the chance to develop relationships with the children. She was initially drawn to being an educator because she loved to see teachers holding the attention of an entire room of students. Regardless of age or grade level, McGhee says all children have the basic need of wanting people to care about them and wanting to be acknowledged.

"When the children walk through those [school] doors each day, I like to see them smiling! I love to open car doors in the morning because I want to be the first one to see them excited about coming into this building," she enthused.

She looks forward to spending time with family when her work is done. "I plan to do lots of reading and relaxing – and I don't know what I'll do after that!" McGhee's husband, also retired, has a surprise planned for her, but he's not giving any hints.

She sounds sad when she talks about the end of June being her last day. "It's been a part of my life for so long," McGhee reflects, "[but] it's time for a change. I want the school to always have

the best – the best instruction, for the children to do well, and for the staff to do well by challenging them and taking them to the next level.”

She treasures the notes, cards, and pictures students have sent marking her retirement. Always encouraging the personal nature of handwritten communication, McGhee says the computer has its place, but the art of a handmade note or gesture should never be left to fall through the cracks. In recent days, she has been the honored recipient of dinners, books of photographs, recipes, scrapbooked notes, and memories that will last a lifetime. “I’m going to look at those things forever,” said McGhee. “It’s going to be an anniversary every June 30th.”

Frank Wiggins has been named by the Granville County Board of Education as McGhee’s successor.