



Donna Brakefield

Administrative Assistant

Words by Riley Aldridge | Image by Ryan McGill

“Dedicated” is a word that means “devoted to a cause, ideal, or purpose; zealous.” And it’s a word that describes Donna Brakefield’s service to Walker College and Bevill State Community College. Through the years, Donna has worked alongside college presidents, performed various duties, and helped to brace the college like a column supports a pediment.

A 1975 Carbon Hill High graduate, Donna came to Walker College in 1981 after hearing about a job opening for secretary to the president. She began working as an administrative assistant for Dr. David Rowland, creating recruiting and alumni letters, supervising the switchboard and printer, handling fundraising, communication, and doing general clerical work. She was in constant contact with college deans and worked with student services, recruiting, instruction, and the boys’ and girls’ dormitories.

Although her job duties mainly focused on managing the office, her work impacted the lives of many students.

When the college’s 1980s-90s-era technology was updated during the transition to Bevill State, Brakefield was able to step away from supervising switchboards and printers and become more involved in communication and clerical work.

Throughout her years at the college, Brakefield has worked for every president except the first one, Dr. Carl Jesse, and Dr. Harold

Wade. She says she learned something useful from each one of them.

“Dr. Rowland was very kind to me and helped me learn what that position required,” Brakefield says. “We had a switchboard and I supervised three work-study students. They were at this window so they were the first people anybody would see. He made us realize how important that connection was. He was all about that personal connection.”

Donna is very active at First United Methodist Church in Carbon Hill where she plays the organ. She also enjoys visiting with her daughter and son (her husband passed away in 2013), both who are Bevill State and University of Alabama graduates.

She enjoyed working in the college atmosphere and says the best experience she gained was it allowed her to be more forward thinking and young thinking. She retired about two years ago but returned on a part-time basis in 2021. She now works for BSSC Vice-President of Instructional and Student Services Dr. Leslie Hartley and is thrilled to be involved with the “young atmosphere” again.

“I’m very blessed to have worked at that college all these years,” Donna says. “I don’t think people realize what a gem it is to have a college in this community.” **78**