

BeLinda Parrish became an official GAPT member in 1998. But her love for pupil transportation began in 1983 when her oldest daughter, Ericah, began elementary school. She wanted to have a job that allowed her the freedom to continue to be home with her two girls.

“There was not a day during my childhood when I would look outside the window of our home and not see a big yellow school bus parked in our driveway,” her youngest daughter DeeAnna says. “We grew up on buses. If Ericah and I weren’t riding one to and from school we were riding them to basketball games that mom would drive the high school teams to on weekends. My sister and I perfected the art of sleeping and doing homework on a bus.”

Her girls got to watch their mother doing something that she loved. And she turned that job that she loved into a career. In 1993 BeLinda made the move from driving a bus for the county school system to the city. Five years later in 1998 she was promoted to the Director of Transportation for Dalton Public Schools. BeLinda has always believed that, “this was exactly what she was supposed to do in life.”

Her years of service as the Transportation Director for Dalton Public Schools brought many challenges and many triumphs. She was on the board of directors for GAPT and has also been a moderator for the Northwest Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) meetings. Eventually, she not only served as director of transportation, but wore dual hats as the Director of Custodial Services as well. BeLinda has met so many other directors during her time in transportation and some of those people have become amazing mentors and life long friends.

On a “normal” work day BeLinda could be seen walking through any of the eleven Dalton Public Schools campuses making sure the custodial staff had everything it needed to make the schools look and be their best. One of her favorite visits would be to First Student to go over bus routes or help troubleshoot any bus related issues. What most didn’t see her doing during her years in transportation was sitting at home at nine o’clock at night getting phone calls because of an alarm at a school, or being up at four in the morning to drive around on the phone with emergency management personnel to determine whether or not the roads were safe for the buses to get the students to and from school. No matter what the hour or day, she always did whatever was needed and she loved doing it.

In August of 2019, BeLinda retired from Dalton Public Schools after thirty-six years in pupil transportation. Since retiring she and her love of forty-two years, Alan, have moved closer to her oldest daughter and son-in-law and their three amazing grand children. She spends her days volunteering at her grandchildren’s schools and picking them up from their bus stop after school to grab ice cream and spend quality time. She does all of this in between unplanned trips to New York as much as possible to visit her youngest daughter, sometimes just because! BeLinda is grateful for the years she spent devoted to the job she loved, but she will be the first to tell you that, “Retirement life is a good life!”