

35 YEARS AND COUNTING!

By **Christi Cowan**

There are a few things that might surprise you about Linda Hillyer, Dawson's Administrator of Membership & Records. She enjoys painting, she appreciates modern technology, and she's a bit of a daredevil. For her 65th birthday, Linda celebrated by riding all of the roller coasters at Six Flags Over Georgia. She wanted to do something even more thrilling for her 70th, so without hesitation, she decided to go skydiving! "I was a little nervous at first," she said, "but I wasn't scared."

Linda will garner another milestone this year. In February, Linda will celebrate 35 years of working at Dawson. Linda's job entails keeping accurate member records with all contact information, granting and requesting church membership letters, and keeping up-to-date lists of Life Group attendance. She also provides help in the Finance Department with the weekly offering, and she is always eager to support other administrative assistants with mailing lists.

It goes without saying that Linda has seen quite a few changes over the years, from staff and buildings to ministries and technology. When first on staff in 1977, Linda worked with the Single's Director before taking on the Membership duties. In those days, physical filing systems filled a wall and were accessed by several assistants who worked in the same room. "When I first came, we didn't have computers," she said. "We used typewriters." Things are easier now, she says, since finding and updating membership records requires only a few clicks within Dawson's digital system.

After nearly six years in that role, Linda left to work with her husband, Billy, who was the principal at a local Christian school. Soon after, they nearly moved to Florida for a job offer but decided to stay since they were nearing the end of the adoption process. Three days after they declined that offer, they found out that they were about to become parents to a baby girl.

Linda stayed home with their daughter, Meredith, for several years and then later decided that she would like to go back to work. Just a few minutes after mentioning this to her mother, the phone rang, and Linda was offered her old job back at Dawson. "Gene Turner called me and said 'Your old job is open. Do you want it back?' And I said, 'Yes I do.' And so here I am, 35 years later, still here."

Linda says that one of the best parts of working at Dawson is the environment and the coworkers around her. "For 35 years I have been surrounded by dedicated, Christian men and women who love God and who provide a wonderful work environment. Every day we come together, caring for one another, to do the work of the church."

One of the initial draws to Dawson for Linda and her family was the availability of programs for children. These days, Linda appreciates the diversity of the people who make Dawson their family of faith and the fact that Dawson's members are mission-minded. She has also seen the many ways that God has worked in the life of our church. "Your faith gets stronger because you see how God works things out. He may not work them out the way you want Him to, but He works them out."

While many things have come and gone in the past 35 years, some of Linda's favorite additions have been the stained glass window in the baptistry and the ceiling mural in the Vestibule. Although, Linda has seen other things come and go, the basic bonds of friendship have stayed put. Linda and Billy are a part of the Lenora Pate and Judy Mason Life Group, where they have always found encouragement and support. As a group, they study the Bible, pray for one another, and volunteer together. Linda and Billy also taught 4-year-old Sunday School for eight years and enjoyed every minute of it.

Linda's coworkers point out that she is a very caring and giving person, and someone who is very dedicated to her job. Receptionist Alice Harris said, "She's a friend that will stand beside you, and if you need her for any reason, day or night, she would come. I treasure her friendship." Business Administrator Randy Poe added, "It's so rare, for the world we live in, to have an employee for 35 years. Linda's knowledge, experience, and history with Dawson are invaluable, and we are so blessed to have her as a staff member."

Linda and Billy live in Homewood with their daughter, Meredith, and granddaughter, Breanna. They are both appreciative for the life they have together and how Dawson has played an integral role. "We have achieved an uncomplicated lifestyle that is gratifying to both of us," she said. "Together we have learned to appreciate the small and satisfying pleasures that life offers. Learning how to trust God in all things and how He is with us always—through the difficult times as well as the happy ones. Our love for the Lord has brought us a deep sense of love and gratitude for one another, our family, and our church family."

When asked about her accomplishments and what gives her joy, Linda beams when sharing that her marriage and family are an accomplishment, and that she has much gratitude for her job here at Dawson. "And," she adds, "I jumped out of an airplane, so I'm pretty proud of that!"

Thank you, Linda, for 35 years of service and dedication to Dawson. We are so grateful for you! †



Christi Cowan serves as one of Dawson's graphic designers and also manages the website. She has a background in journalism and print media. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, scrapbooking, and playing with her cats. She loves all things Disney and will probably beat you at Disney trivia.



That's one way to celebrate a 70th birthday a a a a y y !

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