

Geraldine Carpenter Belmear



The late Geraldine Carpenter Belmear began her career with West Virginia University Extension in 1948 as an apprentice at West Virginia State College. She was employed in August 1949 by West Virginia State College and WVU to serve the counties of Barbour, Harrison, Taylor and Upshur. In 1961, her area of responsibility changed to include the counties of Barbour, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia and Taylor. This service included working with African-American 4-H clubs, homemaker organizations, young men and women's clubs and other community organizations.

In 1966, she was appointed to the position of Home Demonstration Agent for Marion County. She was the first African-American agent in West Virginia and the nation to lead an integrated Home Demonstration program in a single county.

In addition to her work in Marion County, she was assigned to direct the statewide 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Program, supervising 15 agents for this federally funded program for low-income West Virginia youth.

In 1971, she was appointed to the State 4-H staff in Morgantown as a program assistant. She developed a series of publications, game books, and other materials for the nutrition program featuring "Go-Go, the Good Nutrition Clown." The United States Department of Agriculture honored Belmear's efforts.

In 1973, she was appointed Extension Specialist for 4-H programs and began working parttime as an advisor to African-American students at WVU. She filled both roles until her retirement in 1978.

During her long career, she was devoted to improving the family life of rural West Virginians, encouraging adult homemakers to develop skills to improve their standards of living despite limited resources. She encouraged and supported West Virginia youth to earn scholarships to pursue higher education.

After her retirement from WVU Extension, she took on the full-time role of Black Student Advisor at WVU. In 1981, she became assistant to the Dean of Student Life for minority affairs, establishing a mentor program for WVU's minority student population. Ms. Belmear loved working with the WVU community, particularly the students, and retired officially in 1987. She was an active volunteer until her death May 7, 2005.