

# VELMA J. WILSON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM DIRECTOR

*For six years, I served as Quitman County Administrator and Consultant. Within that tenure, I dedicated myself to elevating impoverished communities within the Mississippi Delta region, and successfully obtained over \$3 million in federal and state grants. This funding was utilized to construct the Northwest Regional Amtrak station in Marks; to improve public utilities; develop workforce opportunities; and increase tourism-related activities. As the county's first Economic Development and Tourism Director, I will expand the county-wide cultural event, the Mules & Blues Festival; establish a Visitors' Welcome Center; and attract new business and industry to this region with the overarching mission to decrease the county's high unemployment rate.*



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220 Chestnut Street  
Marks, MS 38646

## EDUCATION

### **St. Norbert College**

*DePere, Wisconsin*

Bachelor of Arts / Sociology Major  
Full academic scholarship

### **Quitman County High School**

*Marks, Mississippi*

Diploma / Class Valedictorian

## SKILLS

*civic and non-profit leadership  
strategic planning / grant writing  
community networking and partnerships / economic development  
tourism / festival and event organization / budgeting and financial and committee oversight  
digital and brand marketing  
staff recruitment and hiring  
crisis management*

## ACHIEVEMENTS

### ***What's In the Water, Author***

Non-fiction novel written as a tribute to my mother who raised 17 children in the Delta, and serves as a guide for developing strong family values and overcoming adversities / Sold over 2,000 copies / Winner of 2013 Daughters of American Revolution Print Media Award

**Wilson Automotive Group, Co-Business Owner (20 years)**  
Multi-Franchises (Buick, GMC, Dodge, Chrysler, Hyundai)  
Jackson, Tennessee

### **2013 Sterling Awardee Recipient**

Named as one of twenty most influential women in West Tennessee for civic, business and community contributions

### **Oprah's Magazine Contributor**

Appeared in October and November 2013 issues

### **Jackson, TN Chapter of Links, Inc., President (2008-2012)**

Multiple awards for work with youth and community service

### **Delta Council Officer (2019)**

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### **Quitman County Mississippi, Economic & Tourism Director**

*2020 - Present*

- Developed mission, goals and by-laws for the organization
- Provided content for the Quitman County Economic & Tourism [website](#), a catalyst to market to potential businesses and industry, as a means to seek funding resources for economic opportunities

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## WORK EXPERIENCE CONT.

- Earmarked \$80,000 of grant funding to purchase the Quitman County Visitors' Center, which is parallel to the local Amtrak station. It will serve as lounge space and restrooms for waiters and riders for the two trains that stop daily in Marks, and also as the Economic & Tourism Department.
- Successfully obtained \$200,000 to assist with the renovation of a full-service grocery store, which officially closed in 2017, making the county a food desert. The store is scheduled to open December 1st.

### **Quitman County Mississippi Board of Supervisors, Consultant & County Administrator** 2015 - 2019

- Coordinated negotiations with federal, state and local elected officials, as well as regional stakeholders in an agreement with Canadian National Railroad and Amtrak to allow construction of an Amtrak station.
- Worked in conjunction with Mississippi Development Authority (MDA); Mississippi Department of Transportation, North Delta Planning District, and the Quitman County Board of Supervisors to secure \$1,200,000 to construct the Amtrak station, which has daily routes to New Orleans and Chicago.
- Submitted a request to the 2017 Mississippi State Legislative for \$500,000 for assistance with the construction of the Amtrak station. The county was awarded the \$500,000 for the project in a senate bond bill approved at the 2018 Extraordinary Legislative Session, held in September.
- In coordination with Quitman County School District and Belinda Stewart Architects, successfully stabilized and renovated the Marks' Rosenwald School, a Mississippi Landmark, with \$458,000 in grant funding from Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
- Coordinated with MDA and stakeholders to secure funding and design the 1968 Mule Train-Trail Marker.
- Worked with Mississippi State University's Carl Small Town Center to obtain a 2015 National Endowment of the Arts grant for \$25,000 for a trailhead sign in Marks' public park. In 2017, \$50,000 from the National Park Service was also given to Quitman County to Mark the Mule-Train Trail.
- In 2015, founded and organized the Annual Quitman County Mules & Blues Festival, which is based on the history of the 1968 Marks Mule Train & MLK's Poor People's Campaign to Washington, D.C. During the first five years, the festival grew to over 3,000 attendees, and a total of over \$180,000 in revenue, including grants from MDA and MAC, sponsorships, as well as vendor and merchandise sales.

### **Doxicom Recycling, LLC, Public Relations, Marketing & Retention Manager** 2009-2013

Jackson, Tennessee

- Assisted with website and social media content; produced company e-newsletter to 5,000+ subscribers
- Assisted with recruitment of the initial 12 manufactures; staged recognition Geengroo award events and ceremonies for achieved milestones and obtaining company goals of waste reduction and improving the environment.

### **Wilson Auto Dealership, Founder and Co-Owner** 1991-2009

Jackson, Tennessee

- Multi-car franchised (Buick, GMC, Pontiac, Chrysler, Dodge, Hyundai, and Toyota)
- Started with one dealership in 1991, and expanded to four locations with over 100 employees