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Lyda to retire

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BREVARD — Transylvania County is losing its top educator as Superintendent Sonna Lyda announced her retirement this week.

Lyda made the announcement during Monday's school board meeting. Her retirement is effective June 30.

At the end of her tenure, she will have served 38 years as an employee of Transylvania County Schools. Her last seven years, from April 2003 to the present, have been spent as superintendent.

Lyda said she had "mixed emotions" about leaving her long-time career, but felt it was time to go.

"Difficult as it is to leave, I feel it is time for me to devote time to my family and enjoy our family farm as well as to pursue some interests I have long wanted to explore," she said. "I have truly enjoyed my various roles throughout the years."

She expressed appreciation and thanks to school board members during Monday's meeting.

"I will miss the students, the excitement of beginning a new year and the satisfaction of working together with you as we strive toward ever more ambitious goals," Lyda said. "I could never have hoped for a group more dedicated to our students or more consistently supportive of me."

'A great lady'

Transylvania County Schools Testing Coordinator Bo Williams worked with Lyda when she taught math at Brevard Middle School and he was the school's principal in the late '70s. Lyda first informed him and other Central Office staffers last week about her decision and the reaction was one of shock, he said.

"Everyone was speechless — I mean it was dead silent and no one knew what to say," Williams said. "She's a great lady. I think the best way to describe Sonna is that she was a great teacher, a great educator, a great boss, an outstanding superintendent — but her greatest attribute is that she is an even better person."



Transylvania County School Superintendent Sonna Lyda will retire effective June 30.

Transylvania County Board of Commissioners Chairman Jason Chappell served on the county school board from 1998 to 2004, and was vice chairman of the board during his last two years of service. He said Lyda will be sorely missed.

"It is truly a loss for Transylvania County Schools and Transylvania County in general," Chappell said Tuesday. "Two of the things I am most proud of during my term on the School Board was being able to select her as the interim superintendent and shortly afterward selecting her as our permanent superintendent. Our school system is better off because we had Dr. Lyda's leadership and I wish her the very best."

A history of service

The Henderson County native is the daughter of Mildred Hudgins Lyda and the late Rome Lyda of Edneyville. The Lyda family owns Lyda Farms, an apple farming operation in Edneyville.

Lyda is a graduate of Edneyville High School and Western Carolina University. She received a master's degree from Western Carolina University and earned her doctorate at the University of South Carolina.

A former math and science teacher, Lyda has served the county school system in various capacities since 1971. She started her education career at Brevard Middle School, where she taught for eight years before being appointed as a supervisor at the county school system's Central Office in 1979.

She held a variety of positions in the central office prior to becoming superintendent, including supervisor of elementary and secondary education curriculum, personnel director and staff development director.

Lyda became interim superintendent following the resignation of Terry Holliday in November 2002. She has also served as a consultant to other school systems for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

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