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## **Beverly Womack Celebrates 25th Anniversary of Helping Others**



When she was a teenager, Beverly Womack knew she wanted to be a counselor.

As a Christian, she said, she always wanted to help others.

“I think it’s been my calling,” she said. “I’m doing what I think I was meant to do.”

On April 1, Mrs. Womack celebrated her 25th anniversary of opening her private therapy and counseling practice in Jacksonville. She added a Tyler office about 10 years ago.

Mrs. Womack grew up in Rusk. After her father died in a car accident when she was 5, she was raised by her mother and grandmother, who taught her how to love, have fun and work, she said. Family was a strong support system and encouraged her to

follow her dreams.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville and a Master of Science Degree from The University of Texas at Tyler.

She began her “first career” as a juvenile parole officer for the Texas Youth Commission, working in the Tyler District for 14 years. After receiving her master’s degree, she became licensed as a clinical social worker and went into private practice on April 1, 1987.

When she first opened her practice, she consulted and trained juvenile and criminal justice agencies. She also developed and taught curriculum to students preparing to be substance abuse counselors at UT Tyler and UT Arlington, all the while running her private practice.

She ran a government-contracted substance abuse outpatient treatment program she had in nine counties. While running the program, she continued to do private therapy and became a licensed marriage and family therapist in the 1980s. She also became a forensics counselor, working with court-related issues, such as child custody and evaluations.

In 2004, Mrs. Womack decided to downsize her practice, ended the substance abuse program and became a solo practitioner, which she remains today. She focuses primarily on marriage and family therapy, individual psychotherapy and substance addictions.

She bounces between offices in Jacksonville, where she sees clients on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, and a second office in Tyler, on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Her office manager Laurie Ferrell schedules appointments and does general office management.

Mrs. Womack was appointed in 2005 and reappointed in 2009 by Gov. Rick Perry to serve as a member of the State's Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists. The board adopts rules and regulations to license and regulate the qualifications and performance of marriage and family therapists licensed in Texas. She serves as vice-chairwoman of the board and the Ethics Committee and her term expires in 2015.

Mrs. Womack has been married to Dewayne for 38 years, a retired Jacksonville school teacher, and they have two children and four grandchildren.

Juggling her busy career and family life, she owes primarily to the support of family and close friends, she said. Her daughter was in kindergarten when she opened her practice. She said it was important to always put her children's activities on her calendar first and to prioritize.

Mrs. Womack said a client recently joked with her about how hard it must be to hear other people's problems eight hours a day, but Mrs. Womack likes to believe she makes a difference in their lives. Helping others makes her happy — that's the key, she said.

"I've been very blessed over the years to help other people," she said.

Mrs. Womack said she has evolved from working with children in her early career, to dealing with a lot of every day issues.

"I love attempting to motivate people to help themselves," she said. "I believe strongly in preserving the family. Most couples also believe this, but need guidance and encouragement."

In the past few years, Mrs. Womack has seen more couples for pre-marriage and marriage counseling, as well as people with issues on what to do with their parents as they age. She said alcoholism continues to be a major problem for families but she said prescription abuse, which also destroys families, has become more prevalent. She counsels people for financial situations, such as losing a job and other big family stressors.

In Tyler, her office is located at 5935 Old Bullard Road, Suite 200, and can be reached at 903-535-7290. In Jacksonville, she is at 514 E. Commerce St. in Jacksonville, where she can be contacted at 903-586-1428.