

# Debbi Goertz brings legal acumen, community service to Board

By Melissa Segrest

**D**eborah (Debbi) Beck Goertz's lifelong passion for learning has taken her down several career paths. As Bluebonnet's newest member of the Board of Directors, she plans to put that experience to use on behalf of the cooperative's members.

Debbi was appointed in January 2017 to the District 3 Bastrop County seat left open by the unexpected death of Kathleen Handy, who was a director from 2013-2016.

From work as a manager at Bloomingdale's to being the state's administrator for school bus safety to her work as an attorney today, Debbi brings to the Board an ability to listen carefully, ask smart questions and seek solutions with others. "No one is successful in a vacuum," she said.

"My ability to break down complicated issues and resolve them will be an asset to the Board," she said. "I enjoy being a team player and working with others toward a common goal. I also enjoy being with people and consider myself to be very approachable."

Debbi was born in Kilgore and grew up there and in Bryan. The oldest of four children, her family has always been close-knit. After graduating from Bryan High School, she received a bachelor's degree in teaching and a master's degree in merchandising from Texas Tech University in Lubbock. From there she worked at Bloomingdale's in Dallas, becoming manager of multiple departments. With encouragement from others, she opted for a change in direction and graduated from Baylor Law School in Waco. She married classmate Bryan Goertz of Bastrop in 1993.

After working briefly in Bryan's firm, Debbi began a career with the Texas Department of Public Safety, first as a hearing examiner, then as Texas' administrator for school bus safety. To better understand her role, Debbi attended driver training and received certification as



**Debbi Goertz of Bastrop was appointed to the Bluebonnet Board of Directors in January. She assumes the District 3 seat. Here, Debbi stands outside the iconic 1930s-era Refectory at Bastrop State Park.**

Sarah Beal photo

a school bus driver. "My belief was that the people I worked with at the local, state and national levels would be a lot more willing to work with me if I showed my commitment to the program," she said. In her job, she evaluated and oversaw driver safety education training, kept the program in compliance with the law and drafted rules about school bus safety in Texas.

Most of Debbi's career since 2004 has been at her own Bastrop law office, where she represents clients in civil matters, including estate planning, probate and residential real estate law.

"It is a great honor for me to be a part of the Bluebonnet team," she said. "My legal background will be helpful when evaluating information and policies and bringing that information to the Board."

Debbi has been a Bluebonnet member since 1998. "I have always been very impressed with the customer service and degree of community involvement that Bluebonnet provides. I wanted to work with Bluebonnet to continue to provide reliable service at a good value for our

members and help improve our community."

Debbi and Bryan have a daughter, Abby, who graduated from Smithville High School, where Debbi exercised her teaching degree with a stint as a culinary arts and nutrition teacher. Now Abby is a student at the University of Texas at Austin. Bryan is a fifth-generation Bastrop County resident who has been Bastrop County's district attorney since 2003.

Debbi has worked with numerous Bastrop nonprofit groups, including the Children's Advocacy Center, the Bastrop County Historical Society and the Family Crisis Center, and as a Girl Scout leader for 13 years. When they aren't working, the Goertzes enjoy time at their land in Rockne.

Of Bluebonnet's six Foundation Values, safety stands out for Debbi. "During my years as the state administrator for school bus safety, my greatest responsibility was to ensure the safety of our students. I see safety as a key component at Bluebonnet: ensuring the safety of our employees, our members and the communities we serve." ■