

https://www.messenger-inquirer.com/owensboro-native-senior-vp-with-walmart/article_2aadebdc-8e3f-56c7-9dcb-6f0d452c7f37.html

Owensboro native senior VP with Walmart

By Keith Lawrence Messenger-Inquirer
Apr 11, 2023



Glenda Fleming Willis

In 1995, Glenda Fleming Willis, a graduate of Owensboro High School and Western Kentucky University, was an electrical engineer at Bowling Green Municipal Utilities, making \$15 to \$17 an hour.

But she discovered that she really didn't like the job.

So, Willis quit that job and got a part-time job in asset protection at the Frederica Street Walmart.

In other words, she chased shoplifters across the parking lot — among other things.

And she was making \$8 an hour.

"When I told my parents I was going to quit my job and work part time at Walmart, I thought my Dad was going to have a coronary," Willis said with a laugh.

Flash forward 28 years and she's now a senior vice president for 900 Walmart supercenters in eight states, including Kentucky.

Those stores employ 250,000 people.

And Willis is making considerably more than \$8 an hour.

"Walmart has been a blessing," she said. "It really has paid off."

Her sister, Mistie Fleming, was a manager at Walmart 28 years ago and encouraged Willis to make the transition.

Today, she's an executive assistant for Sam's Clubs.

And, Willis said, her parents, Glenn and Jackie Fleming, "are so proud of us."

When she joined Walmart, there was only one Walmart in Owensboro and it wasn't a supercenter.

The current store on Frederica had opened in 1992 as a 125,881-square-foot Walmart.

In 1997, the company added 72,000 square feet and turned it into a 24-hour supercenters with groceries.

Willis said the store was recently remodeled and “it looks like a brand new store.”

And nobody chases shoplifters across the parking lot these days.

“Times have changed and it’s just too dangerous today,” Willis said.

Looking back to the day 28 years ago, when she applied for the job at Walmart, she says, “Sometimes, you’ve gotta take that risk. Walmart convinced me to go into management. I love this job. They teach you and train you. They encourage you to be versatile.”

Willis said, “In 28 years, I’ve had eight different jobs. I’ve been able to use all that experience.”

Her husband, Owensboro native Ken Willis, was a placekicker for the University of Kentucky, Dallas Cowboys, Tampa Bay Buccaneers and New York Giants before a career-ending leg injury.

He turned to teaching after that.

Today, Glenda Willis said, he’s retired, playing a lot of golf and working with their daughter, Maysa, a high school senior and soccer goalie on her punts and goal kicks.

Today, they live in Bentonville, Arkansas, where Walmart’s headquarters are.

“We’ve lived her twice,” Glenda Willis said. “From 2000 to 2009 the first time. Then we moved to St. Louis until 2015. We’ve been back since then.”

She’s served on the Children’s Miracle Network hospitals board for the past six years.

“It’s one of the most enlightening experiences of my life,” Willis said. “I’m so grateful for the opportunity to work with them. I’ll serve as long as they’ll let me.”

Keith Lawrence, klawrence@messenger-inquirer.com.

Keith Lawrence