

## Retired alum believes in Wauneta's main street, giving back

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 22 May 2014 00:00 -

---



**Lela Hamilton is a 1948 Wauneta High School graduate who has made multiple contributions to Wauneta's business community as well as a dedicated volunteer. (Courtesy Photo)**

**By Sheri Hink-Wagner**

**The Wauneta Breeze**

Contributions to a community come in many different forms and are completed in many ways. In the same way, it is easy for those of us in a small town to overlook amazing accomplishments of "one of our own" because their actions may be taken for granted.

Lela (Kennedy) Hamilton is one of those unsung heroes of the Wauneta community. She has made countless contributions to Wauneta organizations over the years and has provided hours of volunteer work.

## **Retired alum believes in Wauneta's main street, giving back**

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 22 May 2014 00:00 -

---

Hamilton grew up on Wauneta's north divide and attended grade school at the Blanche School north of town. She graduated from Wauneta High School in 1948.

A couple years after her high school graduation she moved to town and began a long career on Wauneta's main street.

"Main street has been my life," Hamilton explains. "Wauneta is home."

The Wauneta community and the experiences she's gained here have shaped Hamilton into the giving, dependable woman she is today.

In her words, "Wauneta's been my home, I've never really been anywhere else I thought I'd want to be."

### **Life on main street**

Hamilton worked seven years at Grimm's Hardware Store where she performed a variety of tasks, including window installations. She remembers Mr. Grimm fondly, saying he was a great teacher.

Then, she worked for the Village for three years as a bookkeeper for the water and electric department.

On Jan. 2, 1960, Hamilton began a long career at Wauneta's bank, then Wauneta Falls Bank.

## Retired alum believes in Wauneta's main street, giving back

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 22 May 2014 00:00 -

---

While there she worked under three generations of Greens—first for John W. Green, then Wiley Green and then John M. Green. She also saw the transition into the present Valley Bank & Trust.

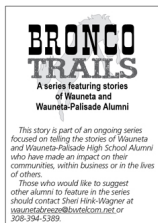
“She was great to work for, she taught me a lot of what I know today,” said Brenda Anderson, now the Senior Vice President at Wauneta's Valley Bank & Trust.

Hamilton served as the bank's cashier for years. Anderson remembers that Hamilton was very easy going and how she knew everyone because she'd been at the bank and in the community for so long.

Hamilton retired from the bank in 2009, after 49 years and one month on the job.

In 1976 after the house next door was put up for sale Hamilton and her late husband, Ray, whom she married Sept. 4, 1972, found themselves in the rental business, owning seven rentals in Wauneta at their peak. She is down to two rentals now and getting ready to leave the business. Although she loves the work, it's becoming more than she wants to do in her later years.

## Active volunteer



Her volunteer posts are equally impressive. Hamilton served as the treasurer for the Salvation Army when there was a unit in town. She also served as treasurer for the United Methodist Church for many years. Although she's resigned from an official capacity, Hamilton is still very

## Retired alum believes in Wauneta's main street, giving back

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 22 May 2014 00:00 -

---

active at the United Methodist Church.

She has also been very involved in Wauneta's Senior Center. Myra Large with the Wauneta Senior Center says, "We have a sign at the Senior Center that says, 'Volunteers are unpaid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.' That's how we feel about Lela."

In the past, Hamilton has volunteered to act as the bookkeeper when it was first started and helping to get it moved from the Legion to the current buildings on main street.

Hamilton served on the Senior Center board for 10 years. Today, she's still very active. She delivers meals to shut-ins one day per week. Hamilton said she's at the Center from "10:30 a.m. until the dishes are done," every day she's in town. She also helps out with bookkeeping when needed.

The Wauneta Chamber has also been a big part of Hamilton's life. She first joined the Chamber with her late husband. She continues her membership today with brother-in-law Richard "Pudge" Hamilton.

As a part of the Chamber Hamilton has been active in the planning and implementation of Harvest Fest for a long time. She is also always ready to bring food to Chamber sponsored events.

## Travel

Hamilton has always enjoyed traveling. She and Ray took many trips—especially bus tours. Bus tours were Ray's favorite, something that always surprised Hamilton since he owned a car dealership with his brothers.

## Retired alum believes in Wauneta's main street, giving back

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 22 May 2014 00:00 -

---

She continued her travels after Ray passed away in 2011 from skin cancer.

Her favorite trip was one to Washington D.C., one she originally planned to take with Ray but he became too sick to make the trip. Hamilton would love the opportunity to go back to the Capitol.

Other interesting trips she remembers include Mackinac Island in Michigan and Cape Cod. She also holds fond memories of a trip to Florida with Marvin and Arline Large when Marvin was delivering an A.I. barn to the University of Florida. The trip included an evening at Disney World.