



Norma White

Norma White, a retired landscape architect and small business owner, lives in Little River Township with her husband, Dick, a retired Duke University biology professor. She has spent decades working on issues impacting rural Orange County.

Norma was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and, after graduating from Oberlin College in Ohio, came to the area to attend Duke University on a fellowship. She met her husband while attending Duke; they were married in 1965. After her children, Richard, Karen, and Susan, were in school, she returned to school herself to complete a degree in landscape architecture at North Carolina State University.

Norma became concerned about some of the issues faced by people in rural areas, especially in northern Orange County. Residents of rural areas have limited access to healthcare and public transportation, and cellphone and Internet services are lacking in many areas. In 2014, Norma became a member of the first class of community leaders to complete training for Project EngAGE, a 13-week leadership-training program, sponsored by the Orange County Department on Aging, designed to empower and enable older adult leaders to make Orange County a better place for seniors to live and age well. This course challenged its graduates to choose a course of action to help seniors age in place in their community.

Norma and seven others chose to join up with a visitation program called SALT (Seniors and Lawmen Together). SALT had been visiting seniors who were attempting to age in place with the assistance of a weekly well-being check by friends from the Sheriff's Office. This collaboration of forces led Norma to find seniors in situations that she hadn't seen before, people who had needs but were too proud to accept help. Norma wanted to get Meals on Wheels to help these people who live too far from the city for the existing agency to reach out that far. So, with the assistance of a few friends, she formed the Orange County Rural Alliance (OCRA). OCRA's goal is to provide assistance to the elderly and disabled in rural Orange county with monitoring health conditions, hot meals, food, minor home repairs, consistent weekly visits, observation and correction of unsafe living conditions, and referral to county or volunteer resources that may provide additional assistance as well as county social services, health care service referrals, and transportation as needed.

She has also served as Secretary of Orange County Voice; a volunteer with Hillsborough Meals on Wheels; past Chairman of Orange County Historic Preservation Committee; founding member of the Hillsborough Tree Board; and the Occoneechee Mountain Park Committee.

Of her many accomplishments, Norma is proudest of being a representative for voices that would not be heard otherwise and of being a part of a great volunteer community. The biggest change she has noted over the years has been the urbanization of many rural areas, which have become "bedroom communities" for the area universities. Her fondest memory of living in the area is simply "country;" enjoying life in rural Orange County. In the future, she hopes that rural residents will have better access to transportation and quality food stores. Whenever people were advocating for equity for rural residents, Norma was there. Norma's impact on our community is amazing.