

# Goal Setter

## *Plans shape next career decisions for Justice.*

*By Anglea Lutz*

When it comes to setting goals, **Evelyn Wilson, '85**, is something of an expert. She became the newest Kansas Supreme Court justice in January, the pinnacle of a successful legal career that started with a lot of uncertainty about whether she would attend law school at all.

“After I went to college I wanted to go to law school, but I wasn’t sure I would be admitted because it’s competitive,” Wilson said. “My plan was to go into business if I couldn’t get into law school – but I did get in. My first goal was to get out of law school with passing – hopefully good – grades.”

Wilson not only met but exceeded expectations of this challenge, working on the Washburn Law Journal and graduating with honors. During her time at Washburn University School of Law, Wilson studied with professors who she described as available, supportive, and willing to help their students.

“I feel extremely fortunate to have gotten my law school education from Washburn,” she said. “They were so approachable. I think that really shows how personally brave they were. In order to be so approachable, you must have the courage to be seen as a person and not just a professor. Because they were not just willing to share their brilliance but also their humanity, that is what makes Washburn extra special.”

After earning her law degree, Wilson took a job in Oberlin, Kansas, where her next goal was to be a good country lawyer – and later, when her husband’s job moved their family to Topeka, she worked her way up to managing partner at a prestigious law firm. When she saw an opening for Shawnee County district judge, she went for it – and then she set her sights on becoming chief judge. When **Justice Lee Johnson, '80**, retired from the Kansas Supreme Court last fall, Wilson started thinking about the qualities she’d like to see in the person who succeeded him.

“I thought I’d really like for that person to have a good idea of what it’s like to be a lawyer in the trenches,” she said. “I’d really like to see someone who has been a district judge and



Evelyn Wilson, '85. Photo submitted

been able to see all different kinds of law. I started thinking – I have some of those experiences that I’d like to see in the next justice.”

After running it by some trusted friends, Wilson decided to apply – a good decision, to be sure. Having achieved her highest ambition, she now regularly speaks to students about how to set and accomplish goals. She urges young people to keep an open mind and do the things that interest them. Above all, she hopes to encourage them the way others supported her along her journey.

“Being appointed to the Supreme Court is a very humbling experience for me personally,” Wilson said. “It’s a great honor. I want to do everything I can to make all of those people who helped me proud.”