

*Catalyst Profile*  
**Angela Reece**

Angela Reece, who graduated in 2014, is hoping to foment change on a grassroots level. As town clerk of Black Mountain, this former Catamount has been “do-gooding” in Appalachia through interacting with elected officials, indexing city records, and advocating for tentative ordinances.

Before taking this position in June of 2015, Reece served as a dispatcher for the Haywood County Sheriff’s Office. There, behind monitors and multi-channel radio workstations, the North Carolina native decided to pursue higher education.

After attending Haywood Community College, Reece enrolled in WCU’s criminal justice program. Despite working full-time, she raised money for KARE House, a nonprofit dedicated to preventing child abuse. Time was also spent on a capacity building project for The Community Table and a social media initiative for the Buncombe County Council on Aging.

With a bachelor’s degree in tow, she was quickly promoted to a probation parole officer position in 2008. Years later, while carrying a high-risk caseload, Reece returned to Cullowhee to obtain a master's in Public Administration.

The graduate level work provided “diverse opportunities” while professors such as Jay Gerlach and Roger Hatley bestowed their guidance. Courses such as Legal Issues in Public Affairs and Public Organizational Theory would ultimately allow Reece to draft a special event policy and application process for the Town of Canton.

The policy, which was written with respect to North Carolina health and safety standards, was passed into ordinance in early 2015. Reece, a current Canton resident, expects the new procedures will protect the town’s interests while encouraging responsible event planning.

This glimpse into municipal government inspired Reece to resign from her parole officer position and begin working with the Town of Black Mountain.

“I left for the chance to utilize my degree to make a difference in local communities in Western North Carolina,” she said.

Now, while reflecting on her career and academic pursuits, Reece cannot help but mention her biggest supporter—her daughter Monica. As a current sophomore in WCU’s biology program, Monica is the first female in the Reece family to graduate with a high school diploma.

“Along the way there were many people who doubted and discouraged me, but you have to surround yourself with supporters,” said Reece. “Never give up; education is the key to success both personally and professionally.”