

### **Nelda Brown's Story 25 Years Later**



Nelda continues to believe in and support Begin Anew's (formerly Christian Women's Job Corps) mission and vision. She was a member of the original group of volunteers who saw a need to serve women who were overlooked and underserved. She humbly shares that she initially got involved because of her relationship with Begin Anew co-founders Candy Phillips and Creely Wilson. Within five years of the founding date (1997), Nelda agreed to serve as Board Chairman from the fall of 2002 through the summer of 2003.

She also stepped up to serve on the annual fundraiser committee in 2005 and in 2013 and 2014, she was asked to serve as the Committee Chair.

Nelda reminisced over the many discussions among Women's Mission Union (WMU) members about the need to help women living in poverty and how to best address this need. While plans to launch Begin Anew were in motion, the WMU sent team members to Chicago to meet with other nonprofits to help determine how to best create life-changing impact for women living in poverty.

After this trip, they determined that the best way to create long term life-changing impact for individuals living in poverty was through improving their education! In 1997, Begin Anew began providing training and mentoring to working poor women seeking basic skills necessary for employment and a self-sufficient life. These skills included GED, English Language Learning, and Computer/Life/Job skills (which continue to be our core focus today). Women who were initially served had many barriers to overcome including abuse, homelessness, released from prison, internationals, recovering from addiction and much more. Nelda continued to work alongside Candy and helped coordinate and invite attendees to meetings to create greater awareness of the need and in addition, help to recruit volunteers.

When Carolyn Hunter, Mary Frances Turner, and Candy Phillips launched the annual fundraiser, Nelda and several other women came to the table to help generate revenue that would allow Begin Anew the ability to serve more women. Renee Holt with First Baptist Church helped write content, put programs together, and took care of marketing the fundraiser. Sara Lu Lunn, Susan Rutledge, and Becky Harrell soon joined the committee and added their expertise along with Elizabeth Ward who offered her computer skills to begin tracking critical information. Nelda shared, "God put the right people in our path."

Since the beginning, Nelda has been actively engaged in helping Begin Anew raise awareness and funding necessary to keep the mission and vision in motion! It has always been important to her that others have the opportunity to hear the life-changing stories of the students and volunteers who give of their time and talents. In 2020, the pandemic shifted the annual fundraiser to a virtual format and Nelda immediately signed up to host a small group and invite family and friends to participate virtually.

25 years later, Nelda continues to be involved because of the difference that is being made through God's transformational impact.