

Lewis H. Nelson

Passionate Community Activist Pays It Forward

By Perdita Spriggs

Lewis Nelson starts his day well before the sun rises and doesn't slow down until long after sunset. "I'm an early bird and a workaholic," he readily admits. "The extra time helps me get everything done." Thirteen-hour days are typical, characterizing Nelson's strong work ethic and his passion to give back to the community that helped him survive.

Nelson's journey is not for the faint-of-heart. His mother's tragic death separated he and his brother and two sisters at a very young age. Sadly, he never knew his father. Nelson spent more than 15 years in and out of emergency shelters, foster homes, and several children's homes. He finally found stability at the United Methodist Church Epworth's Children's Home. Each experience opened his eyes to life on the streets but also filled his heart with compassion and gratitude. "People along the way helped me," remembers the University of South Carolina and South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy alum. "I try to pay it forward and help others."

The tough times tested Nelson's grit and tenacity and led to his purpose-driven life. After a police officer stint with the Richland County Sheriff's Department in Columbia, Nelson joined Allstate Insurance Company as a special investigator for the Property, Arson, and Fraud Unit. For almost 20 years, Nelson has tackled questionable claims, uncovering his fair share of truth, lies, and the down right unbelievable. "A client once claimed ghosts stole all of her household goods," chuckles the Beaufort, SC, native. "Amazingly, the ghosts brought everything back a few days later."

True to Masonic Tradition

When not crisscrossing the state investigating insurance claims, Nelson's passion is working in the community. "I'm a people person and care how they feel," says Nelson, the



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25th Most Worshipful Grand Master for the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of South Carolina, who recently represented the South Carolina Prince Hall Grand Lodge in Serbia. “God has blessed me, and I want to help others along the way.”

Nelson’s community reach is extensive, and his accolades well deserved. Despite his all-consuming schedule, Nelson still makes his health a priority. “If you’re going to help others, you have to be healthy,” says the widowed father of four who walks, consciously watches the food he eats, and is active with Journey United Methodist Church. “If you’re in poor health, someone has to take care of you.” ■

Lewis Nelson’s numerous professional and community service awards include:

- **National Philanthropist Award**
- **Mason of the Year for Capital City Lodge #47**
- **Allstate Good Hands Award**
- **Allstate Chairman Quality Award for Outstanding Service**

**“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands
in moments of comfort and convenience, but where
he stands at times of challenge and controversy.
The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige,
and even his life for the welfare of others.”**

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.