

## **Cari Newton and going from giving to those with everything, to those with nothing.**



By Maylon Rawls

Cari Newton is the founder of Benevolist.org, a for-profit organization based in Raleigh, North Carolina, that publishes donation drives for nonprofits. For Newton, the journey of starting Benevolist.org came from a desire to change her life and start making a change in the lives of the less fortunate.

Before launching Benevolist.org, Newton had a successful career in the marketing industry. A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Newton worked in advertising and marketing for most of her career. Newton has experience working with retail companies, pharmaceuticals and advertising agencies. After years of working in industry, Newton said she woke up one morning and decided to change her life.

“I am tired of making lots and lots of money for people who already have lots and lots of money. My heart is in helping people in need,” she said.

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Newton found her calling after organizing an event at her church, Backpack Buddies.?

"There must be a better way to do this," she said, after observing problems with the collection process. This experience led to the creation of Benevolist.org, a platform that helps nonprofits streamline and organize donation drives to fulfill their stated missions of helping people in need.

Newton said it was difficult to start Benevolist.org from scratch after leaving the corporate world.

"I'm an all-in-kind person, so you know, I worked many hours," she said. "My husband and I call it our tired hours, so I was working in my tired hours on Benevolist on the side, so it wasn't taking away from my workday at all." She said the process was exhausting and came with many setbacks.

The process of getting Benevolist.org off the ground was a hard one. After a year-long battle with health-related issues, she had to pause Benevolist.org's launch, and after disagreements with Benevolist.org's initial partners, Newton said that she "had another year of what I would call hard learning."

Disagreements with partners who she said had a different vision for Benevolist.org than she were costly both in her time and money. The COVID-19 pandemic further delayed Benevolist.org's launch. However, none of this stopped Newton.

"I think everything happened at the right time. It's just hard when you're going through it. It's hard to see that," she said.

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Now that Benevolist.org is up and running, Newton has big plans to expand its presence. She wants Benevolist.org to be a household name, something that is used as a common force for good by many. Currently, she participates in a program sponsored by the Council for Entrepreneurial Development, a nonprofit based in Durham, North Carolina. The GRO Incubator is a course offered by the Council for Entrepreneurial Development that helps 10 organizations strengthen their business skills. Newton said she started her coursework last week and is excited to be a part of the seventh cohort.

For Newton, this program is pushing her forward to accomplishing her goals of growing Benevolist.org. She said she reached a tipping point of determining if Benevolist.org was a “lifestyle business” to make herself feel good, or if she was going “full bore” in accomplishing the mission of Benevolist.org.

“I’m going full bore,” she said. She admits that this comes with growing pains, as three people are currently working with Benevolist.org, including Newton, Kendall Terashima, who is the client success director and a web developer. Newton said she is learning how to scale up Benevolist.org with the help of the GROW Incubator course.

As Newton gets closer to making Benevolist.org a household name, she remains committed to focusing on helping people.

“This is what I want to do. I’ve been blessed.”

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