

Member's Corner: Featuring Renelle Bertsch

Recently, USA Today published an article by Jessica Guynn in the Tech section titled "Here's why women, blacks and Hispanics are leaving tech," The answer, was unfair behavior and treatment. After all the years since starting my first job in the late 60's, it seems that not much has changed. This is the reason why I keep working to achieve change for women and to help women advance themselves.

When I received the email that I had been nominated to the North Dakota Women's Network state board I jumped at the opportunity. What a gift! Here was an opportunity to help women obtain the elusive status equal to their male counterparts. In my youth, it became painfully obvious there were different jobs and payscales for men and women.

At 23 years old I became frustrated and angry. I even "invited" the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to come to my aid. They did—too late for me--but other women were given compensation.

A year after that, I switched paths to selling real estate, where I thought I had found the one field in sales where women could make as much money as men. However, I soon discovered that the men were given the leads and had the networks thanks to the "Good Old Boys' Network." But women just did not have those connections.

Finally, I found a business where women helped women get ahead, Mary Kay Cosmetics. This worked for me. For more than 36 years this was the business that gave me the opportunity to help hundreds of women to help themselves.

I also found AAUW and used many of the opportunities there to educate women to the possibilities open to them.

I have used every platform presented that I can to help other women to help themselves. I began to place myself as an example in lead positions and sometimes uncomfortable places, whether in my own career or by creating community boards and opportunities for women to shine. I stepped way out of my comfort zone and ran for City Council and 8.5 years later am the only woman out of eight on the Council. It is important that we continue to step out of our comfort zones and challenge ourselves to speak up against the inequalities that women still face. I am grateful for the NDWN and the amazing platform that it offers.

As I see it, creating women's equality is every woman and man's job in order to use all of the talent in our world to create a positive peaceful place for humanity to thrive. Without gender equality our children and our world's future will continue to be held back.