

How far NCAB has come; Ellen would be proud!

By Marion Webster Walls

Both 2012 recipients of the Ellen Dailey Award (Carey Carner of Denver, CO and Sue Campbell of Las Cruces, NM) were first time attendees at the conference. It was my honor to be Sue Campbell's mentor, to help her negotiate all the complexities of the conference, and lend an ear to any and all issues that arose throughout the week.

Seven years ago I attended *my* first conference in Portland, Oregon – a city I had never visited. After a horrific and lengthy shuttle ride from the airport (the shuttle was full and I was the last one to be dropped off) I finally arrived at the hotel, where the driver let me out at the garage entrance. Aggravated beyond belief, I yelled at the garage attendants (like it was their fault I felt lost!) yet they calmly showed me the way to the hotel entrance.

Once inside the hotel, seeing that the hotel check-in desk was obviously not on the main floor, I felt my panic rising and looked around for someone else to scream at....and in walked Ulysses Manor, a member of the original NCAB created by Ellen Dailey. He led me to a large leather couch and said: "Now, Honey, what seems to be the problem?" I poured out my frustration to this kind, listening ear, and Ulysses said: "I have someone for you to meet."

Down the stairs behind us walked this amazon of a woman who, I was to learn that week, had not only an amazing story, but huge heart. Ellen Dailey took me under her wing, including me in all her activities. I ate meals with her and the other NCAB members; she asked my interests and pointed me toward the appropriate workshops; and that first night, she took me directly to the hotel check-in desk and stayed until I got my room key. Ellen was the original mentor.

I did not know the Portland conference would be the last time I would see her. Ellen passed away a week after the conference ended. Yet her work lives on and continues to grow with each new consumer who joins us. In 2005 in Portland, NCAB had approximately 25 members. By 2012, in Kansas City, we had more than 50. We are now growing exponentially, and I know Ellen is smiling down upon each and every one of us!