

# Grandma Was Green And You Can Be Too

By Dr. George B. Brooks, Jr.

Going Green is about finding solutions to our problems that are good for “people, planet and profit” all at the same time. These are the three principles of sustainability. The goal is to create sustainable prosperity and increase our quality of life for generations to come. The question is however, what good is it to us today? How do we capture these benefits for our community, our businesses and most importantly, our families?

Believe it or not, my grandmother has the answer.

My mother’s mother, Willie Barnes and Grandpa Fred lived on a farm at about 29th St and Broadway Rd., on the outskirts of a growing town called Phoenix, Arizona. To make do, Grandma knew how to turn a dime into a dollar. She knew how to patch pants, recycle pop bottles, grow a garden and use the wastewater from the washing machine to irrigate it. She took care of her neighbors as her own family and knew that cleanliness was next to Godliness. Grandma knew how to sustain. Grandma was green.

Back in 1930, Grandma had no knowledge about what we call green. The things she did



*Grandma Willie Barnes*

were just the best ways achieve her primary purpose, to take care of her family. The difference between what Grandma knew then and what we know now is that we have all the environmental, social and economic science to back her actions up.

By letting her purpose guide her actions, Grandma put green to work and you can too. By picking and choosing those green things that help you meet your families needs, you can “Go Green” in a way that benefits you and the planet. This same logic works to best meet the needs of your businesses customers or even for revitalizing our neighborhoods.

Sustainability has reintroduced us to an old way of thinking that creates synergies and builds on win win solutions.

Adding the 4th principle of purpose has given green the direction it needed and demonstrated how to put it to work.

Look at what has happened as Deborah and Darren Chapman (KEYS Community Center and Tigermountain Foundation) have introduced community gardens to the south side of Phoenix. Cleaning off a lot to plant is neighborhood beautification. To learn how to farm

requires adult and youth education. As diverse people begin to work the land and with each other, community safety improves. To eat the harvest brings better nutrition. To sell the crop creates economic development. Just think, all of this and more from just planting a garden. What they are doing is community development and using green to make it happen. From saving money to saving a

neighborhood, imagine what you can do when you learn put green to work, just like your grandma did.

*Subject matter expert in green/sustainability, Dr. Brooks is an environmental scientist member of the Phoenix Union High School Governing Board representing Ward 2 and author of the SW-Green.com website and magazine.*



*Darren Chapman at one of the community gardens in South Phoenix.*