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By RHONDA CROWDER

Staff Reporter

In 2007, while working at Progressive Insurance, Miesha Wilson stepped out on a limb to open Nulife Life Fitness Camp on Waterloo Road. Shortly after, she expanded with the opening of a Superior Avenue location.

Last year this time, she and her team were preparing to celebrate the opening of a third location on Northfield Road and, this upcoming year, they will be commemorating the fifth anniversary of establishing the NuLife brand.

“It was the best decision I ever made,” said Wilson, of leaving Progressive to pursue this business venture.

Because the first five years in business are the most crucial for any entrepreneur, especially minority business owners, Wilson went on to discuss the biggest obstacles encountered since she started.

While the support and growth from word of mouth alone has been NuLife’s strongest advertising vehicle, over the years some of the challenges Wilson has faced included sustaining the business through peak and off peak seasons.

“The first couple of years it was really hard but we learned how to better project for trends and manage cash flow,” she said. She also noted that they have continuously worked to improve customer service, which she believes has become the cornerstone of Nulife Fitness Camp.

When asked what she thinks sets her centers apart from other fitness programs in the area, Wilson said, “NuLife is definitely the trendsetter.”

She believes NuLife stays above the trends and works to improve personal service by always following up with clients and showing compassion. She understands that the process of losing weight is a struggle that involves not only a physical but a psychological challenge as well. “This is not just a place to come work out. We are not going to just take a payment,” she said.

She went on to explain that a lot of effort goes toward providing customer service at a high, professional level. She even sends birthday cards and attends funerals as clients become like family. “A lot of times, we exceed expectations.”

Upon reflecting on the decision she made to leave Progressive and start NuLife, she describes those moments as terrifying. At the time, Wilson was in school one night a week working toward a graduate degree, a full-time analyst, and she taught fitness classes before and after work.

She became overwhelmed and something had to go.

In the meantime, she went to lunch with a friend who had been pushing her to pursue NuLife. The friend told her she was using Progressive as a security blanket. She agreed and determined that Progressive was it.

When Wilson stepped back to analyze the situation, she realized that she had actually set herself up to take the first step. And as luck would have it, she was recently invited back to Progressive to participate in a health fair.

Looking back, Wilson realizes she didn’t have any mentors or role models to help in her business pursuits. “I didn’t have anyone to guide me. I had to do a lot by myself. It took a lot of hard work, researching, and networking,” said Wilson.

However, despite being a mother, wife, oldest sister… “A lot of things to a lot of people,” she continues to make it work. “It’s been fun. We bring fun into fitness,” she said.

She also thinks it’s important for members of the Black community to support small, Black owned business and attempts to do business with them first as much as possible.

In the New Year, Nulife will also incorporate pole dancing, yoga, and hip-hop cardio into their programming but the one thing she's looking forward to the most is obtaining a franchise license to continue expanding the brand throughout Ohio.

Ironically, franchising was built into the business plan she created five years ago.

"Franchising supersedes what I ever thought I could do," said Wilson.

All in all, she's proud that she's been able to build a staple in our community while looking forward to the next five years and beyond.

NuLife Fitness Camp is hosting their annual Ultimate Fitness Party on New Years Day at 3615 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio from 1 to 6 p.m. Free and open to the public, the party will include Zumba, pole dancing, spin, Hip Hop Cardio, massages, manicures, and more. For more information call (216) 391-4442 or visit www.nulifefitnesscamp.com