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Good morning everyone. Thank you for allowing me to be here today. Thank you to Senator Tim Scott and his Aging Committee for all they are doing for our senior population across South Carolina.

All over the world, there is an elderly man or woman that fought for us to be in a room, fought for us to sit on a board and/or fought for us to be in a seat. We should not take that for granted. It is not just any man or woman, but an Aging Beauty. The name has nothing to do with gender or looks but everything to do with grace and wisdom. Aging Beauty, a person with exemplary wisdom, who should be celebrated and valued daily. Some of us have lost sight of the honor that an Aging Beauty should be shown. My agency was created to make sure that no older adult goes unnoticed and that that honor is bestowed. When we speak of older adults, our mind should not think of someone dying, someone old or even someone helpless. We should automatically think of someone who has been where we are going, who has paved the way for all of us and who has made so many sacrifices in our world for us to operate at our best.

Here is my personal story...I remember falling in love with older adults ever since I was a young child. After years of working with Aging Beauties, I asked my mom where the love came from. She mentioned that I never wanted to play with children my age, but instead sit under the oak tree of my grandparents' house listening to the stories told by them. In listening, I found that older adults were special, honorable and had been through so much in life. Their stories should be saved, shared and used to inspire the next generation. At that moment, while young, I knew I could be the one to make that happen.

I began the path of training healthcare professionals through my organization, Professional Development and Training Services, LLC. We teach EKG, Nurse Aide, Phlebotomy, Clinical Medical Assistant, etc. The training was geared towards all people with different levels of care, but a special emphasis toward our older adults. I wanted older adults to experience proper care and have care provided to them that would be rewarding to them and rewarding for the caregiver giving it. That was not enough for me so to honor them more, I created a special day for them titled: Senior Service Day: Honoring our Elderly Population. Fortunately, I was able to present this to Mayor Stephen Benjamin and the day was quickly pronounced and declared stating that September 12th would be Senior Service Day: Honoring our Elderly Population. Mayor Tony Scully of Camden, SC followed the trend. Now, thanks to Governor Henry McMaster, the day has been proclaimed for the entire state of South Carolina. Because of this,

we can reach thousands of older adults on this day to show companionship and engagement. We had so much fun honoring seniors on that day that I thought it would be best to do it on a regular basis. Also, after meeting Governor McMaster, I was encouraged to birth my nonprofit agency, Caring for Aging Beauties. I saw that older adults did not deserve one day, but every day, to show them that they are deserving of our attention. Caring for Aging Beauties nonprofit provides The Care Lab, a place where family members who are caring for loved ones can come and learn technical skills for FREE. They can also connect with other family members in the same situation and receive peer support. The students who are trained in our trade school use volunteer hours to help these family members learn the technical skill. The students get experience, volunteer hours and a connection with families and seniors before leaving our school. We provide an annual Senior and Caregiver Expo so that seniors and caregivers stay abreast of current resources provided to them. The day is filled with fun, fellowship, self-care, food and lots of music. We also have birthday clubs, pen pal programs, yearly calendars, monthly activities and I can go on and on. We named the programs we created Connecting Generations Program. We just simply love what we do and are blessed to do it.

The biggest reward of this is being able to capture these stories and make a difference in the lives of those that once cared for us.

As one of our participants, **Mary Brevard**, shared, "Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength."

Audrey Hepburn-

"The beauty of a woman is not in a facial mole, but true beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul. It is the caring that she lovingly gives, the passion that she knows. Aging Beauty of a woman with passing years only grows!"