



CO-TRUSTEE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

RAY H. NEILSEN

Ray Neilsen was appointed as Co-Trustee and Chairman of the Board of the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation upon the passing of his father, Craig H. Neilsen in 2006. In these roles, Ray is actively involved in overseeing the investment of the Foundation's assets; determining the strategic direction, budget and allocation of the Foundation's grantmaking activities; establishing procedures for the objective review and assessment of grant applications; approving staffing plans; and, overseeing the Foundation staff in the implementation of its grant programs.

In addition to his work with the Foundation, Ray is the President of Neilsen and Company, a real estate development company responsible for a number of major commercial, residential, educational and municipal buildings. Originally founded and operated by his grandfather in the 1960s and led by his dad for the next three decades, Ray continues the Neilsen family legacy of creating exceptional real estate projects. Neilsen and Company is developing projects ranging from hotels and restaurants to mixed use projects in various roles from investor-partner to co-owner. Their projects are located from Mississippi to Texas to Idaho.

Ray's professional career began as a busboy at Ameristar Casinos, Inc., the company founded by Craig H. Neilsen. His father insisted Ray immerse himself in and learn about all levels of the organization, so he worked through the ranks and was with the company for 20 years. Ultimately, Ray served as Chairman of the Board of Directors, as well as Senior Vice President and Board Co-Chairman and Vice President of Operations and Special Projects.

As an advocate of education, he helped create "Education Pays," a program that piloted on the Warren County campus of Hinds Community College in Vicksburg, Mississippi and eventually expanded to the capital city of Jackson. Education Pays provides the classes and support needed to prepare adult students to obtain a GED, as well as the tools necessary to navigate the college process. In 2014, Ray's work was recognized with an Alumni Service Award by Hinds Community College.

Ray is also a financial supporter and advocate of Oxford, Mississippi's Burns-Belfry Museum and Multicultural Center, a restoration project to preserve and protect northern Mississippi's first African American church. In addition, he supported the creation of the Chair in Judaic Studies at the College of Idaho, his undergraduate alma mater. The Chair was the first of its kind at the College of Idaho, as well as the Intermountain West.

Ray earned a Bachelor of Science degree in history from the College of Idaho and a Masters in Business Administration from the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

