

Women in business

Business Women Take the Lead

September 22nd Celebrates the American Business Woman

By Kathleen M. Nevin

Google “women in business,” and you’ll get over 117 million hits. According to the U. S. Department of Labor, women comprised 46.5 percent of the total workforce in 2008 – 68 million women who go to work every day. Further, the report says that nearly 40 percent of employed women work in management, professional and related occupations.

The number of women-owned businesses grew 20 percent between 1997 and 2002, says a U. S. Census Bureau report. The report also estimates that there are over 8,000 women-owned businesses in Monterey County – from home-based businesses and sole-proprietorships to firms with one or more employees.

American Business Women’s Day on Tuesday, September 22, kicks off the American Business Women’s Association (ABWA) annual leadership conference in Kansas City. The ABWA dares businesswomen to “reach, discover and evolve” through networking, professional development and “the steady beat of hundreds of working women coming together for a common goal.”

Professional development and networking are key goals for the Salinas Valley Business Women’s Network (SVBWN), a group of nearly 80 businesswomen who meet monthly in Salinas.

“We’re very focused on helping women build their businesses,” says president Paula Hendricks-Prieur. “We poll our members and build our programs based on topics that will help our members grow, like how to make a presentation or a speech.”

Many professional businesswomen – especially those who work alone in home-based businesses or sole-proprietorships – find that networking is one of the most important aspects of joining a group like SVBWN.

“Everything in this area happens

because of relationships,” says SVBWN member Jill Allen, development director for Dorothy’s Place. “This group is all about relationship building.”

As the individual members network with each other, SVBWN fosters relationship building on another level, as business clubs work together to develop the business leaders of tomorrow.

Members of SVBWN enjoy a reciprocal relationship with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce (SVCC), and each group raises funds and offers grants to local nonprofit organizations. In addition, both groups award scholarships to individuals who want to join the Salinas Valley Leadership program, which has provided personal and professional development to local women and men for 28 years.

IMPOWER, the SVCC Foundation’s program to “Inspire, Motivate, Prepare and Organize Women to Engage and Reinvest” celebrates its one-year anniversary at its October 8th luncheon. IMPOWER brings women together “for personal and professional growth, to learn, inspire and changes lives within our community.”

“In our first year, we’ve raised \$30,000 for the Salinas Valley Chamber Foundation,” says Tiffany DiTullio, SVCC President/CEO. “We’re donating scholarships to Leadership Salinas Valley and local nonprofits. We’ve also found that IMPOWER has encouraged more people to get involved philanthropically in the community.”

Business Success

Two groups that network well together – the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce (MCCVB) and the Professional Women’s Network (PWN) – meet over a “Brown Bag Lunch” on October 14th. It’s this type of idea exchange that has made Wendy Brickman, coordinator of the monthly Brown Bag Lunch Seminars for 19 years, a local marketing success story.

Named the current PWN Woman of the Year, and recently selected as one of the Top Eight Women in Monterey County for 2009 by the Monterey County Commission on the Status of Women, Brickman has “forged a closer alliance between PWN and the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce.”

Brickman’s networking began when she moved to the Monterey Peninsula after she finished graduate school. “When I moved to Monterey in 1990, I didn’t know anyone in the area,” Brickman recalls. “I joined the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and the Professional Women’s Network, volunteered on a few committees, and started to meet some very nice people. Significantly, I followed through on what I had promised to do, and people started associating my volunteer work with how I run my company. They started to both hire me and refer clients to me. That’s why I always recommend to not volunteer to do a task if you are unable to do what you promised to do.”

After completing Leadership Monterey Peninsula and Leadership Santa Cruz, Brickman says she “met people I normally would not have met. “In a small community like we have, networking is critical to a company’s success...plus it is fun!” says Brickman. “Networking has been very instrumental in my business success and has led directly to all of the awards I’ve been honored to receive.”

Serving the Community

Businesswomen who want to work together to serve their community and “improve the lives of women and girls” may find Soroptimist International (SI) to be a good fit.

“Our primary mission is service,” says Lori Oliver, president of SI of Carmel Bay, which makes an annual award to a woman trying to make a bet-

ter life for herself. SI clubs offer social networking, and many life-long friendships result in business success.”

Another aspect of relationship building is connecting local women to funding.

Connecting local women to funding is one way that the Women’s Fund of Monterey County is able to help move women out of poverty with “microloans” of \$500 to \$5,000 through 1st Capital Bank. The Women’s Fund developed the Women’s Business Education and Loan Program (WBELP) for low- or no-income women who are interested in starting their own businesses. As part of the WBELP, low-interest loans are available to women who graduate from business education programs provided by El Pajaro Community Development Corporation, ALBA (Agriculture and Land-based Training Association) and the Marina Technology Cluster.

“Research shows that women who have economic security are able to provide that same security to their families,” says Tobi Marcus, Ph.D., Director of the Women’s Fund of Monterey County, one of 140 member funds of the international Women’s Funding Network. “We know that women are the strongest fiber in our community, and that when women thrive, their families thrive and ultimately, the community thrives.”

By identifying community priorities, funding solutions, and investing time and talent, the Women’s Fund seeks to improve the lives of women and girls in Monterey County. The Women’s Fund is a “Field of Interest” fund at the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

Women helping women, networking and building relationships, are building the foundation for a stable economy in Monterey County. The financial self-reliance of women in busi-

ness in Monterey County will ultimately translate into the economic security of families and the community itself. Let’s celebrate women in business!

Helpful Resources:

- American Business Women’s Association, www.abwa.org
- California Association for Microenterprise Opportunity (CAMEO), www.microbiz.org
- Central California Women’s Business Partners (WBP), including Monterey County, 805-595-1357, or toll-free, 877-831-9377, www.mscorp.org
- Central Coast Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Cabrillo College, 479-6136, www.cabrillo.edu/services/sbdc
- Community Foundation for Monterey County, 375-9712, www.cfmc.org
- El Pajaro Community Development Corporation (CDC), 722-1224, www.elpajarcodc.org
- IMPOWER Luncheons, Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, Tiffany DiTullio, President/CEO, 751-7725, www.salinascchamber.com
- Marina Technology Cluster, 582-9718, www.marinatechnologycluster.org
- Monterey Bay SCORE, www.montereybayscore.org
- Monterey County Commission on the Status of Women, www.co.monterey.ca.us/csw
- Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Brown Bag Lunch Program (free, monthly) and the Women’s Business Council of Monterey County, for businesswomen who have owned their own company or held an executive position for 10 or more years; brickman@brickmanmarketing.com
- Professional Women’s Network of the Monterey Peninsula (PWN) www.pwnmonterey.org
- Salinas Valley Business Women’s Network, www.svbwn.org
- Soroptimist International of Carmel Bay and Salinas, messages: 642-4747, sicarmelbay@soroptimist.net; sisalinas@soroptimist.net; www.soroptimist.org
- Women’s Council of Realtors, 642-2373, email wcrmpc@yahoo.com; website, www.wcrmonterey.org
- Women’s Fund of Monterey County, 375-9712, www.womensfundmonterey.org
- Women’s Funding Network, (415) 441-0706, www.wfn.net
- Zonta International of Monterey, www.zontamonterey.com