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**PEACE THROUGH  
BUSINESS**

The Institute for Economic  
Empowerment of Women

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## **The Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women October Newsletter**

There are so many special events and powerful happenings going on at the Institute, this newsletter is full of dynamic stories. I know your time is stretched, but I hope you can truly capture the essence of our **peace, power, and pride** edition.

The cool fall weather is upon us, and it's hard to believe that just a few short months ago, our Afghan and Rwandan students were in Texas completing the 2010 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program in 100 degree weather.

With the help of great sponsors, board members, government officials, mentors, speakers, and staff, we have graduated another great group of women from the program, and they have already hit the ground running after returning home to change their countries for the better.

The 2011 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program promises to be even bigger and better than ever, and we are excited about the coming year and the new group of women joining the program. The program will again feature In-Country Training in Kabul, Afghanistan and Kigali, Rwanda for 30 – 45 women, and 30 of those women (15 from each country) will be chosen to travel to the United States for Leadership Development in July 2011. To see the timeline for the 2011 program, please visit our website at [www.ieew.org](http://www.ieew.org).

### **Four the People – a night of food, fun, and fashion**

A fashion extravaganza benefiting the Institute's PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program, **Four the People – a celebration of the four elements**, took place in Oklahoma City on September 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Eden Salon**, an Oklahoma City woman-owned business, hosted the fashion show last month, with all proceeds benefiting the Institute's PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program. The featured designer for the event was **Lori Bacigalupi**,



*Edén Salon owner Jan Hill (left)  
with designer Lori Bacigalupi.*



*Speaking at our listening tour  
in Kansas City.*

creator of Kiss of the Wolf clothing. Models strutted down the runway donning wearable pieces of art representing the four elements – earth, air, fire, and water. We are extremely grateful to **Jan Hill**, owner of Eden Salon and PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS mentor, as well as her staff, for their kind hearts and dedication to our mission.

### **Listening tour with women entrepreneurs**

Our first big venture after the 2010 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program was preparing for and launching a project, **Dialogue with Women Entrepreneurs**, in collaboration with Donors Trust, a 501(c)(3) organization.

In two short months, we traveled to **Kansas City, Little Rock, Anaheim, and New York City**. There, we gathered with distinguished women leaders to hold a discussion regarding what issues were impacting women entrepreneurs across the nation and what educational programs were needed to help them sustain their businesses.

At each stop, the women told the Institute what they viewed as problems, ranging from general lack of knowledge on public policy, concerns on deficits and spending, and women business owners need to understand the system. They also offered various solutions, such as more public policy training and education, as well as getting to know elected officials. Finally, we heard a lot of women say that more women business owners should run for office.

After each event, the Institute sent a follow up thank you and a survey to the attendees asking them to rank their concerns. The top three concerns were taxes, deficit and federal spending, and health care.

There is much more to this story, but this provides a general idea of where women business owners are right now, what their needs and concerns are, and their ideas for solutions.

### **PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS alumni wins seat in parliament**

You may remember her story, but in case you are a new subscriber to our newsletter, we'd like to tell you about one of our past PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS graduates – and one of her many successes since completing our program.

**Amir Taj Sirat's** career took flight in 2005 when she established a ball production company designed to help create an income resource for deprived Afghan women in her community.

After participating in the Institute's 2007 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program, Taj realized she was making a good profit, but she pressed on and boosted her revenues by 17 percent. Since then, she's increased revenues by an astounding 400 percent and has hired an additional 240 employees at her manufacturing company, Green Way.

She even inspired and mentored another Afghan woman who went on to participate in and graduate from our 2009 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS



*Many families are fed because of Taj's dream to help  
other Afghan women achieve independence.*

program, truly embracing the **Pay it Forward** mission, which encourages graduates to pay forward the training they received from the Institute to other women from their countries.

In addition to being a smart, savvy business woman, as well as an incredible mentor, Taj was always interested in social and political affairs.

She realized she could do more for the women in her country, and she announced her intention to run for parliament in 2010.

Well, Taj did just that, and we were recently informed that she won! We're still waiting for official confirmation and the final ballot count, so keep your eyes peeled for more information in our next newsletter. We are overjoyed for her achievement, and you should be, too. Congratulations, Taj!



Paola-Marie Alvarez de Bennett (left)  
with Lauren Lago (center) and  
Representative Ann Coody.

## **I Educate & Empower Women**

The Institute recently launched a pilot project to teach and engage Oklahoma City women business owners and high school students in public policy, as well as mentorship with Oklahoma state legislators.

The project is a launch to the **I Educate & Empower Women** campaign aimed at empowering women economically, socially, and politically.

It all started with **Take Your Constituent to Work Day**, where we matched 15 women business owners and 15 entrepreneurial high school students from ASTEC Charter School so they could shadow 15 female state legislators at the Oklahoma State Capitol for a day.

The second leg of the program was **Take Your Legislator to Work Day**, which took place on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. These same women business owners and students were paired with a legislator from her district who visited the woman's office for the morning, met the staff, saw the daily operations, and heard concerns from the business owner.

Here's what one of our participants had to say:

*"I had a wonderful time with Take Your Legislator to Work Day. The student I worked with, Angela, was a total sweetheart. She enjoyed visiting with the Representative to gain a better understanding of what representation she is entitled to. I spent time asking Angela questions about paying taxes, social security, as well as state taxes that contribute to the infrastructure of our cities and state, and I feel that the questions I asked really made her think about how necessary her role in government is even at a nonvoting age. I enjoyed meeting her and look forward to doing more things together outside of the program."*

— Jenny Findley, President, Y.N.Y. Enterprises, Inc.,  
DBA Subway



*I Educate & Empower Women  
participant Jenny Findley.*

The final chapter is a procurement event on October 29<sup>th</sup>, **More Business with Corporate America**, which is a matchmaking workshop, geared toward connecting Oklahoma women and minority business owners with large corporations and the government. Matchmaking with representatives from AT&T, Office Depot, the Small Business Administration, and the government will be available that day. For an invitation to the event, please contact Lin Weigel at 405.943.4474 or [lweigel@ieew.org](mailto:lweigel@ieew.org).

We are thrilled about all of the events that have taken place over the past few months and those on the horizon, so please stay tuned for more exciting information!

Warmest regards,

Terry Neese



*As always, a special thank you goes out to  
our wonderful sponsors and partners!*