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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Women's Initiative Hosting "Connect" Event
with Keynote Speaker Leslie Blodgett, CEO, Bare Escentuals**
*Free networking event brings together business professionals and
low-income, high potential entrepreneurs to increase business success*

Mill Valley, CA - March 18, 2010—On Thursday, March 25 from 6:30-8:30pm, Women's Initiative for Self Employment will host a "Connect" event at the Mill Valley Community Center. Marin resident and Bare Escentuals CEO, Leslie Blodgett, will deliver the evening's keynote address.

Women's Initiative helps low-income, high potential women start up and expand their own businesses, and their Connect Events bring together volunteers from the community and Women's Initiative graduates. "This event is a fantastic opportunity for our graduates to network with people they would never otherwise be able to meet. The skills they gain are invaluable in growing their businesses and rounding out what they learned in class," says Interim Executive Director Nicole Levine.

After the keynote address, the event is set up as a round-table format where community volunteers coach the women in business development. It is open to entrepreneurs and others in the community with a strong business background. Approximately 200 attendees are expected at the event. "This was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had," says a past participant. "Not only was the keynote speaker inspiring, but I really felt like I made a difference in an entrepreneur's life."



Business professionals who would like to attend the event or would like more information should contact Yvonne Casillas at ycasillas@womensinitiative.org or (415) 878-2105.

About the Keynote Speaker

Leslie Blodgett, CEO, Bare Escentuals, will be the keynote speaker at Women's Initiative's Connect Event. When it comes to beauty, Leslie Blodgett started breaking the rules by age 12, sneaking out with makeup on despite her mother's disapproval. This adolescent rebellion soon turned to passion as she embarked upon 23 years of education and cosmetic experience, including positions at Neutrogena and Max Factor. With this solid foundation behind her, Leslie joined Bare Escentuals as CEO in 1994, setting out on an extraordinary journey to bring the healthy beauty products she loved into the hearts and homes of women everywhere.

About Women's Initiative

Women's Initiative provides low-income, high-potential women with the training, funding and ongoing support to start and grow their own businesses and achieve economic independence. For 22 years, Women's Initiative has been providing services in Spanish and English which address the cultural, social and economic barriers to self-sufficiency and provide outstanding results including: five years after graduating, 70% of Women's Initiative's clients are in business; just one year after graduating, average household income increases by more than \$10,000; and for every \$1 that is invested in Women's Initiative, \$30 is returned to the community as a result of graduates paying taxes, hiring others and leaving the welfare system. For more information, please visit www.womensinitiative.org.

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