

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 21, 2005

CONTACT: Justina Cross  
(510) 287-3109 or jcross@womensinitiative.org

## TAKING FLIGHT WITH YOUR BUSINESS

*Celebrate Microenterprise Development Month with Influential Bay Area Business Women*

San Francisco — This October, California celebrates Microenterprise Development Month to raise awareness of microenterprise training and support programs here in our own communities. These tiniest of businesses provide a mighty impact on our local economy. 77% of all new employment growth in California between 1999 and 2003 came from micro-businesses (those with fewer than six employees). By supporting these small storefronts, restaurants, and home-based businesses with training to build successful, sustainable and smart businesses, we can ensure a more stable foundation for our local economy and enjoy vibrant neighborhoods.

*Taking Flight with Your Business* extends support and resources to local entrepreneurs who are starting or expanding their businesses. This day-long business conference is open to all Women's Initiative for Self Employment graduates and local entrepreneurs who want take their business to the next level. 250 attendees will attend seminars offered in both English and Spanish. "This conference brings together the power of influential Bay Area's women in business and the dreams and energy of new entrepreneurs. The infusion of new skills, networks, and inspiration is going to kick up the success of local entrepreneurs. I expect to see a lot of collaboration and business growth from connections made at Taking Flight," stated Julie Abrams, executive director of Women's Initiative. The Get Connected sessions are particularly unique because they will bring together influential business women to serve as mentors for conference participants in action-oriented meetings where business owners can ask for advice and strategize for success. Mentors include: Cloey Hewlett (Partner, Preston Gates & Ellis LLP), Evelyn Dilsaver (Charles Schwab Investment Management), Wendy Ross (SVP, Bank of San Francisco), Carrie Byles (Managing Partner, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill), Paula Collins (CEO, WDG Ventures, Inc.), Bernida Reagan (Director of Social Responsibility, Port of Oakland) and more.

The morning breakfast will be hosted by TV personality Jan Yanehiro and will focus on successful networking. Join co-chairs Joyce Taylor of SBC California and Audrey Goins Brichi of Chevron Corporation for the Leadership Luncheon that will be emceed by Mary Huss, publisher of the San Francisco Business Times. The breakfast features inspiring words by artist and activist Frances Ortiz-Chávez who serves on the Napa Valley Unified School District Board of Trustees and is the President of the Napa County Hispanic Network.

Celebrate giving back during lunch while Oakland entrepreneur Sandra Floyd of Outsource Consulting Services Inc. is honored for her outstanding community involvement. Sandra and her company donate to several community-based organizations, including the Center for AIDS Services and I Have A Dream Foundation. The luncheon will also honor the Graduate Volunteer of the Year, Melina Markarian, owner of Bay Area eBusiness. Melina has worked with Women's Initiative to revitalize our technology curriculum and has logged countless hours supporting events, making phone calls, and inspiring other Latina entrepreneurs.

---

The conference boasts more than a dozen accelerated learning seminars to help women business owners take their business to the next level. Topics include: Beyond the Business Plan and into the Action Plan; Building and Keeping Wealth; Effortless Networking; So Irresistible: Delivering Your Website to the Right Customers; Put Your Best Print Forward: Tips to Becoming Media Savvy Business; and Taxes, Can't Live with Them, Can't Live without Them!

The seminar entitled Beyond the Business Plan and into the Action Plan will be led by an extraordinary team of business experts including Jose Corona (Inner City Advisors), Sandra Floyd (President & CEO, Outsource Consulting Services, Inc.), Maria Barajas (Owner, Acapulco Records), Lori Bonn-Gallagher (CEO, Lori Bonn Design, Inc.) and Deirdre Towery (CEO, ProActive Business Solutions). Lori Bonn, founder and owner Lori Bonn Designs, joins the phenomenal group of presenters who will help attendees strategize for business growth. She has been honored twice as one of the "Fastest Growing Privately-held Companies in America's Inner Cities" by *Inc. Magazine*. Taking Flight with Your Business will be a strong part of the celebration of Microenterprise Development Month (officially announced in a Resolution by Assembly Member Tem Leland Yee) and secures support for local women and minority business owners looking to grow and succeed in their businesses.

**ABOUT WOMEN'S INITIATIVE:**

Founded in 1988, Women's Initiative assists low-income women of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds in becoming economically self-sufficient through entrepreneurial activities. Our organization has proven that women create jobs for themselves and others, access the mainstream economy, and increase their economic self-sufficiency when they are given business planning and financing support. Our graduates have started over 1,000 businesses from photography studios to catering companies and mechanic shops. In the last year alone, our graduates have created over 150 jobs in Bay Area communities.

Women's Initiative tracks participant outcomes and finds that women dramatically increase their incomes, with the average and median incomes of the participants increasing by 85% within 18 months following completion of our comprehensive business management training. During our history, Women's Initiative for Self Employment has served more than 13,000 women. Through our revolving loan fund, we have disbursed over \$800,000 to our clients and helped them to leverage more than \$1,800,000 in capital from other lending sources.

This event would not be possible without the generous support of sponsors: State Farm Insurance, Chevron Corporation, and SBC California.