



February 18, 2009

**WOMEN'S INITIATIVE'S CEO JULIE CASTRO ABRAMS RECEIVES FOUR HONORS FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO BAY AREA WOMEN AND SMALL BUSINESS**

*Honored by the League of Women Voters, Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, the San Francisco Business Times, and the Small Business Administration*

San Francisco, CA – Julie Castro Abrams, CEO of Women's Initiative for Self Employment, has been honored four times in the past six months for her contributions to Bay Area women and small business. Honors include:

- Named a *Woman Who Could be President* by the League of Women Voters at their annual awards gala in February. Other honorees included San Francisco Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier, Diane Jones Lowrey of Levi-Stauss, Lisa Stevens of Wells Fargo and Carolyn Wentz of Wentz Family Estates.
- Received a *Woman of Greatness* award from Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums during the Mayor's Model City Summit on Women in February. The mayor seeks to recognize individuals with a strong and sustained commitment to civic leadership, service and contribution to women and families, and the demonstrated values that promote the spirit of collaboration within the community.
- Selected as the SBA San Francisco District *Women in Business Advocate of the Year* for 2009 by the U.S. Small Business Administration San Francisco District Office for her outstanding advocacy efforts to improve the climate for small business. "The Advocate of the Year award winners showcase the vital importance of small business to America," said Thomas M. Sullivan, Chief Counsel for Advocacy. "These remarkable individuals are advocates by example, promoting the value of entrepreneurship in their communities."
- Honored in June as one of the *Most Influential Women in the Bay Area* by the San Francisco Business Times. This award is given to outstanding women executives who are making a difference in the organizations they lead and in their communities.

Julie Castro Abrams is a national leader in microfinance and women's issues. She has been CEO of Women's Initiative since 2001, following a non-profit career that spanned 20 years in Chicago. She led the transition of Women's Initiative from a founder-led organization to a rapidly growing non-profit that has expanded throughout the Bay Area and increased the number of women trained and receiving microloans tenfold. Under her leadership, significant new services have been developed that contribute to the success of entrepreneurs and the economic growth in the communities served by the organization. Julie currently serves on the Board of the California Association for Microenterprise Opportunity (CAMEO). Prior to her work at Women's Initiative, Julie served as Deputy Director and Director of Development and Marketing at Chicago's Merit School of Music. Previous positions include

Director of Development at Community Christian Alternative Academy and principal at the Catalyst Group consulting firm. She has also held positions with the Illinois Pro-Choice Alliance, the Chicago Department of Health, and the Chicago Foundation for Women. Abrams studied for her masters degree in Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago and has a BA in Human Development and Social Policy from the school of Education at Northwestern University. She currently lives in Novato with her husband and two children.

**ABOUT WOMEN'S INITIATIVE:**

As the nation's largest microenterprise training and funding organization, Women's Initiative for Self Employment propels low-income women into business ownership, and more importantly, tackles barriers to self-sufficiency. In English and in Spanish, women conquer their fears of success, complete a business plan, learn technology, access capital, and meet influential and experienced business people who can help them succeed. Average income more than doubles four years after participation in the Women's Initiative program and 71% of their business owners are making steady sales five years down the road.

The organization focuses on women because women are often those in the lowest-paid sectors of our economy. And it is women who, with the start of a successful business, spend more of their increased income on their families and provide higher paying jobs and better economic development opportunities for their communities. For more than 20 years, Women's Initiative has provided uniquely tailored training, financing, technical assistance, and ongoing support services to improve the quality of life for women, their families and their communities. For more information, go to [www.WomensInitiative.org](http://www.WomensInitiative.org).

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