

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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LOW INCOME WOMEN IN MARIN MAY GET NEW RESOURCE FOR BUILDING BUSINESSES AND CAPITALIZATION

Marin leaders Invite Women's Initiative for Self Employment to Explore Opening a Site

Supervisor Cynthia Murray and members of the Marin Women's Commission are inviting leaders in the community to a breakfast on March 16 at the Embassy Suites to hear about one of the country's leading microenterprise training and financing programs, Women's Initiative for Self Employment, to consider the opportunity of expansion of its services into Marin County. Marin County's most influential business women with a commitment to helping lower-income women create better economic futures for themselves, their families and bring new businesses to Marin County will be in attendance at a breakfast this week. A strategic planning breakfast held on Thursday morning will focus on creating a Marin economy that benefits everyone -- including low-income women who have traditionally been left out and the role that Women's Initiative can play in the fulfillment of that dream.

After 18 years and significant research and study of the outcomes, Women's Initiative has proven that low-income women can create jobs for themselves and others when they are given business planning tools and support. Currently with three sites in San Francisco and Oakland, women from Marin have been crossing both bridges to take classes, but most are unable to make the trip.

WHAT: Marin Leadership Breakfast

**WHEN: Thursday, March 16
8:00am - 9:30am**

**WHERE: [Embassy Suites Hotel](#) - behind Civic Center
101 McInnis Parkway (San Rafael - Freitas Parkway Exit)**

WHY: 77% of all new job growth in California has been from microbusinesses – these businesses, staffed by six people or less, are fueling the economic recovery and growth. After losing jobs from the loss of many major businesses in the last few years, Marin County could use an infusion of new jobs and economic growth.

The gap between those who have and those who do not is widening in Marin County

- The average household income is \$128,000 a year
- More than ½ of Hispanic households earn less than the self-sufficiency standard
- In 2000, nearly 10% of Marin county's population were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with 1/3 of these individuals being children
- Marin county reports some of the highest rates of hunger in the Bay Area with approximately 1/3 of low-income adults reporting food insecurity

Very small businesses are prominent in Marin

- A 2003 report indicated that business growth has stagnated: overall businesses have remained flat but employment has decreased

- Small businesses account for 9 out of every 10 business operations in the county
- Nearly 1/3 of all businesses in Marin are home-based businesses

The County is poised for a unique opportunity to commit to building an economy that works for everyone. By establishing a microbusiness training site, such as the well-known Women's Initiative, in Marin, this vision will become reality over the next five years. Women's Initiative has proven that for every \$1 invested in training and capitalization, women experienced a \$21 return to the local economy within 18 months.

Locally owned businesses are a win for the community

- Net new jobs
- More money circulated in our community. Local merchants spend a much larger portion of total revenue on local labor and local merchants tend to spend their profits within the local economy
- More ownership in the community. Local merchants are more likely to sit on boards of directors and invest in the local community. Including in-kind donations, small businesses gave almost 2 ½ times as much per employee than large businesses
- Volunteerism. Employees of locally owned businesses more likely to volunteer their time on behalf of the business

Speakers:

Supervisor Cynthia Murray

Marin County Supervisor, District 5, Novato

Paula Leroy

Sold her successful Tiburon-based business of 22-years and is leading up this expansion into Marin as a board member of the Women's Initiative

Julie Abrams

CEO, Women's Initiative for Self Employment

Quela Mikell

Owner of Royal Jewelz and Women's Initiative graduate

ABOUT WOMEN'S INITIATIVE:

Founded in 1988, Women's Initiative has been providing low-income women with the means to achieve economic empowerment through results oriented programs that address the cultural, social and economic barriers to self-sufficiency. An intensive 10-week course launches women into business with a business plan, resources to start or expand her business and most importantly the self-confidence to do it. Additionally, Women's Initiative clients can access much needed capital through the loan fund which administers relationship-based loans up to \$25,000. After graduation, women can access ongoing business support and expansion services through SuccessLink, which connects graduates with influential women in business, provides seminars tailored to women business owners and one-on-one coaching sessions.

ABOUT MARIN WOMEN'S COMMISSION

The Marin Women's Commission is a county commission advisory to the Board of Supervisors. The Commission advocates for equity and parity, diversity, self-sufficiency, leadership, and access to resources to enhance the quality of life for Marin County women at all stages of life.

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