



Business start-ups: where the action is for women

By Susan Steinnmueller
staff writer

Women entrepreneurs in Michigan are following a nationwide trend and entering the economic mainstream. Statistics for the state show that while women owned only 4 percent of businesses in 1970, that figure rose to 28 percent in 1980 and 38 percent in 1985 — with four out of five new businesses statewide started by women last year.

Women are especially making a difference in the service sector, with about 45 percent of the legal, medical and information services owned by women, according to the Michigan Department of Labor.

AS WOMEN buy their own businesses, they find that they have a helping hand from the state.

The Office of Women Business Owners was opened three years ago by the Michigan Department of Commerce. Michigan is the only state so far to form one.

The office works with communities to establish economic development, business and leadership opportunities for women.

"The governor recognizes that investing in women owning businesses is absolutely going to give Michigan a competitive edge," says Barbara Gentry, director of the office. "He is taking advantage of a market that no other state does."

"We are on the leading edge, and five years from now, it will be absolutely evident that it is a wise investment."

With the number of Michigan businesses owned by women slightly higher than the nationwide average, that investment already seems to be paying off.

THE GROWTH of business startups by women goes hand in hand with a general nationwide trend of growth in new business startups, notes Gentry.

"In the last quarter, there have been 23,600 businesses started, the highest number ever. These business startups have mainly been in the area of service and technology — areas where most women are."

Elizabeth Howe, Michigan Department of Labor director, says, "The fact is women are responsible for much of the economic upturn in Michigan and the U.S."

"Women owning businesses is an idea whose time has come," says Gentry. "It's a wonderful time to be a woman business owner."

'The fact is women are responsible for much of the economic upturn in Michigan and the U.S.'

Elizabeth Howe,
state labor director

THE STATE co-sponsors an annual, statewide conference for women business owners, now in its third year. To note the growth of women in business, the conference has changed its name.

"Our first two conferences were titled 'Women: The Emerging Entrepreneurs,'" Gentry says. "We switched to the past tense — 'Emerged' — this year because women have clearly taken their place in the mainstream of entrepreneurial enterprise in Michigan and throughout the country."

"Women: The Emerged Entrepreneurs," is Friday and Saturday, May 16 and 17, at the Clarion Hotel in Lansing.

Co-sponsors are the Wayne State University College of Lifelong Learning, Michigan Department of Commerce Office of Women Business Owners, Michigan Small Business Development Center and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The two-day program will feature speakers, workshops, leadership "skilshops," roundtables, a marketplace, procurement appointments and a reception honoring women business owners.

Zoe Wilcox, community affairs consultant for Consumers Power, will open and close the conference. Friday's luncheon speaker will be Marlene Johnson, lieutenant governor of Minnesota. Martha Mertz, president of Mayhood Mertz Realtors, will open Saturday's program.

More than 350 women attended last year's conference in Plymouth. Gentry says this year 500 are expected to attend.

To register, contact Nancy Grose of Wayne State University's College of Lifelong Learning at 577-4710.

To contact the Office of Women Business Owners, call 517-373-6224.

She figures women to succeed

By Susan Steinnmueller
staff writer

Pearl Holferty, an accountant and partner of the Southfield accounting firm of Plante & Moran, was recently honored by Gov. James Blanchard as the U.S. Small Business Administration's Michigan Women in Business Advocate of the Year.

The award is given each year to individuals who have used professional expertise to further the understanding and awareness of small business, and who have taken an active role in creating opportunities for promoting the interests of small businesses.

The Southfield resident said that the work she has done for the National Association of Women Business Owners, including serving as long-range planning vice president, probably contributed to her selection for the award.

She works to help women business owners in a variety of ways, saying, "Today, women are outnumbering men in small business start-ups. I feel privileged to be able to assist them professionally with the goals and objectives for their business plan."

tives for their business plan."

WOMEN BUSINESS owners face different difficulties than their male counterparts, she said.

"I think the biggest problem that they face is obtaining finance, and also credibility as a business owner. When the time comes that these are not factors, you probably won't have an award for women business advocates."

"I think for many years, when women started business, people thought it was just a way for them to keep busy. But women will fight just as hard as men to make their business a success."

Years ago, the problem was perhaps worse, she said. "A banker several years ago said to me, 'It's so unusual to have women business owners.' I said, 'You never told us how much fun it was.'"

But problems of perception persist. "I was talking to someone yesterday who said, 'You know, I didn't know women knew how to work with numbers.'"

A MOTHER of four, she finished her studies after her children were grown. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1970 and a master's in 1973, both at Wayne State University. She has been with Plante & Moran, a firm specializing in small- to medium-size clients, for nine years.

"There were not many women CPAs when I became one," said Holferty. "It is changing — more and more are owning their own CPA firms, and 50 percent of accounting graduates are now women."

"I think women like the challenge of business ownership, they like to be their own bosses," says Holferty. She jokes, "The one way for a woman to be the president of their company is to own one."

"It's a lot of hard work, and women have to learn the skills that go with making it a success — and they have."

HOLFERTY will be speaking at an annual state conference for women business owners to be held in Lansing Friday and Saturday, May 16 and 17. (See related story.) Her topic will be "How to Look Smart," by having a team of experts advising a business, and how to work well with people necessary to business success, such as bankers.

Other professional involvements for Holferty include membership in the Michigan School Business Officials.

She serves on the Federal Reserve of Chicago Small Business Advisory Council and is a delegate to the White House Conference on Small Business. Holferty is listed in Who's Who of American Women.



Pearl Holferty: Women face different obstacles

Ownership provides path to career goals

By Susan Steinnmueller
special writer

The ways women attempt to achieve career goals as business owners are as diverse as the businesses they run.

Joan E. Moore and E. Jill Pollock started the Arbor Consulting Group in Plymouth because they wanted to capitalize on their entrepreneurial skills involving risk taking. Both women were previously employed in fast track corporate positions at Ford Motor Co.

Pat Gray, owner of Uniforce of Birmingham, said she decided to invest in a franchise of the New York-based temporary employment agency, Uniforce Temporary Services, because she wanted more control over her destiny.

The companies are examples of the increasing number of businesses started by women in Michigan in the past five years. Both companies have grown from their start to a staff of 13 and continue to grow as their revenues increase — with the Arbor Consulting Group setting its sights on becoming a big business.

GRAY ACQUIRED Uniforce of Birmingham in 1982, "when she bought out her partner of two years. Two years later, she opened a Southfield office. Since then, Uniforce of Birmingham has become the largest temporary personnel service owned by a woman in the Detroit area."

It also earned recognition in the last two years for having the highest earnings of the 50-plus Uniforce chain nationwide. Clients range from small companies to General Motors, General Electric and IBM.

Gray believes that in order for more women to succeed in business,

they need to change their perception of themselves.

"I truly feel that sometimes, women hold themselves back," she said. "I think there are more opportunities for women today, but women have to educate themselves as to what that entails."

Those include older women, she

said, a group increasingly re-entering the workforce. Having embarked on a full-time career after raising two daughters, Gray, a grandmother of three, particularly enjoys providing older women with employment opportunities.

Please turn to Page 2



STEPHEN CANTRE/Staff photographer

Pat Gray: "The older woman who is willing to go back and learn is gold in the marketplace."

GET TOGETHER WITH GOOD FRIENDS This Summer in Ann Arbor.

Judy Collins, the first lady of folk, will open the 1986 Ann Arbor Summer Festival with a special concert Sat, June 28 8PM



Jazz great Dizzy Gillespie in concert with the J. C. Heard Orchestra will celebrate the final evening of the Festival. Sat, July 19 8PM



Pilobolus Dance Theatre returns to Ann Arbor for two original, irreverent programs of unpredictable movement. Mon & Tue, June 30, July 1 8PM



Veteran actor Kevin McCarthy presents his acclaimed one-man show "Give 'em Hell, Harry" portraying President Harry Truman. Tue, July 15 8PM



South Africa's Market Theatre Company performs "Asinamali," about the hardships of life in South Africa. Michigan premiere. Tue & Wed, July 2-3 8PM



The world's foremost mime, Marcel Marceau joins the Festival again for his third year of speechless triumphs. Thu & Fri, July 17-18 8PM



Sesame Street's Bob McGrath, friend to a generation of American youth, will present an educationally-oriented children's concert. Sun, July 6 2PM



The Acting Company, America's leading touring repertory company presents Shakespeare's "As You Like It" Thu & Sat, July 10 & 12 at 8PM and Sun, July 13 4PM. Also "Orchards," Fri, July 11, 8PM



*ALSO COMING: Waves, the two-dozen member jazz/ballet/break dancing troupe, comes crashing back to Ann Arbor for two performances. Mon & Tue, July 7-8 8PM



All performances take place in Power Center for the Performing Arts in Ann Arbor.

They'd Love to See You!

Tickets go on sale May 12 at all Ticket World outlets.

To order by phone, using a major credit card, call (313) 763-TKTS

