

New state office works for businesswomen

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Michigan main streets are lined with businesses owned by women.

Despite more than \$1 billion in assets, those 80,000 females are often on the sidelines when it comes to getting bank loans and moving up in the Chamber of Commerce.

But through local training and loan programs, the state's Office of Women Business Owners hopes to change that.

"There's a gender bias about a woman's ability to run a business," explained Barbara Gentry, who directs the Commerce Department division.

"We're looked at as hobbyists. They don't take us seriously."

AS PART OF the Blanchard Administration's emphasis on small businesses, the Office of Women Business Owners was set up in 1983.

Only the second office of its kind in the nation, the Commerce Department division focuses on the more than one-third of state companies owned by females.

It also helps women start and run their own enterprises — something they're doing at a rate five times greater than men.

"Women have more choices today — and they're choosing to own their own businesses," said Gentry, the owner of both a commercial real estate acquisition and manufacturing firm.

THE BIG CHALLENGE is turning those women business owners into successful entrepreneurs. That means getting them access to financing, resources, training and the visibility male business owners have.

"They need to realize what a vital force they are in Michigan," said Gentry, during the workshop last weekend on "Women: The Emerging Entrepreneurs" in the Plymouth Hilton.

"If we're doing anything, it's creating this incredible network of women coming together community by community."

Part of the problem for women business owners is that they tend to go into service-related or retail businesses without tangible assets banks will loan against. Gentry's 3,000 calls last year included inquiries from a court reporter, a potter, a soy bean grower, and a creator of clothes for "promis" (pre-mature) babies.

Many of those businesses also are un-

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Barbara Gentry directs Office of Women Business Owners

derated because they are home based and fall under a half million dollars in gross sales.

"THEY ARE classic small businesses," said Gentry, who started out in business buying and decorating houses with a friend.

"Historically, women have been creative in what they have done. But they have soft assets and intellectual assets which are not bankable."

"Women need money, financing and more money," stressed Gentry, whose calls are three fourths about financing.

"If they have money, they can manage."

Aiming at getting government loans for her callers, she soon found herself frustrated because they didn't fit into state or federal guidelines. Only three qualified — and that was because they are involved in manufacturing instead of service or retail.

LOOKING INTO other options, she combed the country for programs which would accomplish her office's goal of assisting emerging and existing businesses.

The result is a three-part program pulled together from three existing in other states. Michigan entered into contracts to duplicate the programs around the state.

Already underway in Flint, the HUB Program for Women's Enterprise surveys community needs. The NET/Pro Entrepreneurial Training Program assesses business owners' skills and

move," said Gentry.

THE THIRD PART of Women's Economic Development Corporations to work on business development and financing. Women who cannot get traditional loans would be able to borrow at low rates from the local WEDCO.

While the programs will be offered statewide, they will only be undertaken in communities where there is a great interest. They are being planned for Grand Rapids, Lansing, Muskegon, Traverse City, and the tri-cities of Midland, Bay City and Saginaw.

Gentry believes firmly that her goals cannot be achieved from Lansing, but must be tackled in the communities. She works with local business women to set up the programs, but relies on them to be the "go fers."

"To try to do this at the state level would be ludicrous," said Gentry. "I want the communities to be responsible for their women. As we create change locally, other communities will become aware and it will spread."

WHILE TRAVELING the state

meeting other women business owners, the Brighton resident has met a lot of very impressive females.

"This would not be successful at all if they didn't take the initiative. They take responsibility for this and move mountains."

Gentry admits it does make her mad

to see women excluded from rightful leadership roles in communities.

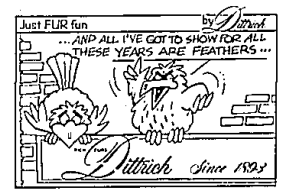
"It's absolutely ludicrous to me that an office has to be created for women business owners," she explained.

"The purpose of my office is to not need my office."

Renaissance talk at OU

A free lecture by Professor Charles Schmitt of the Warburg Institute of the University of London will be presented at Oakland University on Friday, April 12.

The 7:30 p.m. lecture in the Oakland Center Gold Room A is entitled, "The Historiographical Tradition of Renaissance Philosophy."



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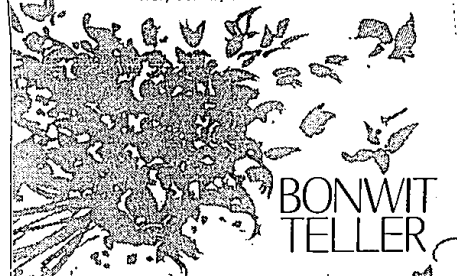
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Family counseling workshops beginning

Oakland Circuit Court will hold a series of family counseling workshops beginning at 7 this evening and continuing Monday evenings through April 29. They are held in First United Methodist Church, 1589 W. Maple, Birmingham.

The two-hour sessions are open to the public and free. The schedule:

- Tonight — "Divorce and the Law," attorney Henry Gornbein.
- April 8 — "How Did I Get into This Mess in the First Place?" with Dr.

Sandra Lyness, licensed psychologist and marriage counselor.

- April 15 — "Financial Aspects of Divorce," attorney Edward Gold.
- April 22 — "How Divorce and Custody Affect Children," Dr. Allen Doctoroff, Psychological Services of Bloomfield.
- April 29 — "Social and Emotional Adjustment to Divorce," Dr. Michael Willett, psychologist with experience in dealing with troubled children.

Kelly helps 5 agencies

Kelly Services, the Troy-based international temporary help firm, announced it has selected five area non-profit organizations to receive a total of 100 hours of free temporary help.

Recipients are Lighthouse, Troy Girls and Boys Club, Boys Republic,

Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan and the American Cancer Society.

Recipients may use any category of help they need, according to Barry Marshall, field vice president for the Detroit region.

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No Dieting — Eat All You Want, Pill Does All The Work

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"Flushes Calories Right Out Of Your Body"

What makes Amiol so thrilling and unique is its reported ability to flush calories right out of your body. Amiol is completely safe, it contains no drugs whatsoever. Its ingredients are derived solely from the Konjac root which grows primarily in Northern Japan.

Why the Konjac root? It has been used in Japan for over 1600 years to produce rapid and natural weight-loss. Japanese studies verify that Konjac root actually prevents fat producing calories from being absorbed into your system. They say it does this by surrounding much of the fats, proteins and carbohydrates you have eaten with a protective viscous coating which is then gently flushed out of your system. And according to Japanese research this produces absolutely amazing results.

And who can disagree! Amiol (although brand new to this country) is

already being called by many people, "the most exciting weight-loss breakthrough of the century." In fact, everywhere there are reports of easy and fast weight-loss from formerly overweight people (in all walks of life) who are now slim, trim, and attractive again.

Company Offers Extraordinary Guarantee

You now can purchase Amiol direct from the North American distributor, and it comes with an extraordinary guarantee.

If you place your order now and then follow the simple instructions for a period of 30 days, you must be completely satisfied with the dramatic visible results or just return the empty container and Dyna Labs will immediately send back your entire purchase price. This guarantee applies regardless of your age or current weight level. What could be better than that! It's just that simple. If you've tried to lose weight before and failed you no longer have an excuse. Amiol is available, it's easy and it works without dieting!

\$19.95 — 30 day supply, or \$35.95 — 60 day supply. Order immediately by sending a check or money order to DYNALABS, 270 No. Canon Dr., Ste. 1255 (Dept. U-21) Beverly Hills, CA, 90210. (Enclose your return address). Credit card holders can order by simply dialing toll free: (1-800-367-2400) 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. Either way your order will be promptly sent. Please don't wait. You really do deserve to be thin.



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