

BUSINESS

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Event targets female entrepreneurs



■ An all-day event regarding government contracting will be held in conjunction with the Women's Business Conference on April 21. Visit www.womensbusinessconference.com/associated_events.html#govt for more information.

Concurrent full-day contracting function scheduled

By Liam Marlaire
Leader-Telegram staff

There are key common mistakes to avoid during any networking event, Maltee McMahon said.

"Many times when we attend social/professional events, we spend time with people we already know," said McMahon, a Menomonie-based provider of motivational and inspirational seminars. "It's safer to sit next to someone we know or talk with someone we know."

"We (also) tend to talk more than we listen. Listening is learning. It is important to listen and encourage others to share their stories. We may find that we have things in common."

McMahon will present "Hi, We Haven't Met: Improving Your Possibilities" as the welcome address at the 2011 Women's Business Conference

— presented by the Western Dairyland Women's Business Center — Thursday, April 21, at The Plaza Hotel & Suites, 1202 W. Clairemont Ave.

The event will feature an exhibitor hall, a keynote address from consultant Kari Dahl and 16 one-hour presentations in four different tracks: business basics, marketing, trends in business and roundtables. Sessions

include "Business Plan Basics," "Social Media 2011 & Beyond," "Using Excel in the Real World" and "Franchising Roundtable." Participants sign up for sessions ahead of time but can take part in multiple tracks and change their itineraries the day of the event.

The program "Growth Strategies and a Practical Guide to Government Contracting" also will be held alongside the Women's Business Conference. Everyone registered for the latter will have full access to the contracting program. Western Dairyland partnered with the Small Business Administration, Wisconsin Procurement Institute and state Department of Commerce to offer the additional event.

"More people are interested in pursuing government contracting as a new potential revenue stream," said Karman Briggs, business center manager for Western Dairyland. "We wanted to respond to the demand by expanding the content and offering a full-day's worth of programming on this timely topic."

The annual Women's Business Conference has grown from 134 participants in 2007 to 322 last year. Nearly 100 exhibitors are expected at this year's eighth annual installment. Although some booths still are available, they sell out each year. Kicking off the conference is a free networking opportunity the night before the main event.

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McMahon

If You Go

What: 2011 Women's Business Conference. Event includes keynote addresses, presentations in four tracks, networking opportunities and booth exhibits.

Where: The Plaza Hotel & Suites, 1202 W. Clairemont Ave.

When: Thursday, April 21. A free pre-conference networking event is at 7 p.m. the night before at The Plaza.

Cost: \$39 through March 31; \$49 after that. Income-eligible scholarships are available. The cost for an exhibitor booth is \$109, which includes lunch for one person. Exhibitors have the option of providing one door prize item with a minimum value of \$25 to give away.

Information: www.WomensBusinessConference.com or 715-836-7511, ext. 171.

Women/ Event only one of its kind in state

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"Although attendees are still primarily from the Chippewa Valley, people have increasingly been coming from throughout the state of Wisconsin, as well as Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois," Briggs said. "The Western Dairyland Women's Business Center is one of just two women's business centers in the state."

"And this is actually the only event of its kind in the state or the region specifically targeting female entrepreneurs."

McMahon applauded programs such as the Women's Business Conference.

"These events are important especially for small businesses because we don't always have the resources to engage outside of our service areas," she said. "This is possibly a scenario where potential clients are coming to us instead of businesses seeking out clients. It is a great promotional tool."

Briggs agreed. "Entrepreneurship is not just a viable option, but it may arguably be the best option for achieving economic self-sufficiency — regardless of your current income bracket or social status," she said. "It is good for people to know that they have options."

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