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The Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women June Newsletter

Can you believe that Leadership Development and mentorship week have already flown by?! The last two weeks have been filled with information and insight-packed lectures, discussion panels, breakout sessions, and so much more, preparing this great group of women to make a real difference in their countries.

Tuesday, June 8, at Leadership Development was a special day spent educating the women about the importance of keeping on top of the finances of their business. Northwood Professor Sabine Adams gave a stimulating presentation: "What Are the Numbers?" During the lecture, the women listened intently as Professor Adams communicated how important it is that they know the finances of their businesses better than anyone else.

"You have to know your numbers," she said. "Remember, knowledge is power."

She was later joined by a panel of IEEW's resident "financial gurus" who spoke with them about their experiences as entrepreneurs, then split into groups with the women, and went through each of their specific businesses, identifying financial issues and how they can fix them.

In the evening, Valerie Freeman, founder and CEO of Imprimis Group, Inc., opened her beautiful home to our women for dinner. The women enjoyed great food and great conversation, and had a chance to get to know each other, and Valerie, better...what a great time! And special thanks to Valerie for not only opening her home but for being on one of the panels just earlier that day; talk about a superwoman!

Wednesday, the women learned how to not only market their businesses, but also how to have self-confidence and strong confidence in their businesses. The women spent the day



Parinaz Hissami, who works with rural women farmers in Afghanistan, with her new friend Marcelline Uwizeye, owner of a designer clothing boutique in Rwanda.



Valerie Freeman with open arms to welcome Rose Busingye, who owns a clothing consignment shop.

with women business leaders like Sylvia Medina, President of North Wind, Inc. learning how critical it is to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of their business, and use both to their advantage.

Mary Schnack of Schnack and Associates showed the women ways she thought “out of the box” to market a business in varying markets.

Roxie Scheske, President and owner of Indian Eyes, LLC, moved the women by telling her story of growing up as a Native American and being raised in the foster care system, but how she used that experience to advance her business through governmental programs.

Rose Busingye, owner of a boutique in Rwanda, said she didn’t know women in America had some of the same problems they did.

“All the women’s stories were compelling, especially Roxie’s,” Rose said. “Even she has gone through a lot in her life in America, and she has overcome all the obstacles.”

The day also included a presentation from Dr. Steve Tidwell, professor at Northwood. He encouraged the women to “keep your customers close, and your competitors closer.”

Dr. Tidwell also encouraged the women to remember kindness in all their business endeavors.

“Although cultures are different, everybody understands kindness,” he said. “And when you exhibit that, it goes a long way.”

The Cedar Hill Community demonstrated a great example of how far kindness can go when community members visited the Northwood campus Wednesday night for dinner to meet the women. Dallas County Commissioner Kenneth Mayfield presented a resolution from Dallas County to the women, declaring June PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS Month in the Dallas county, and June 9 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS Day in Cedar Hill. All the women were presented with copies of the resolution, and students Bonita Mwunvaneza and Rahela Kaveer addressed the community over great food and company.

On Thursday, we were joined by nine female executives from AT&T. Over a great meal, the women shared insight on business, communications and effective management. Charlene Lake expressed the pleasure it is for AT&T to be involved with the program.

The students embarked on a brave journey together: identifying obstacles they faced in their countries and ways to overcome them. With the help of Mike



Bonita and Rahela with Dallas County Commissioner Mayfield at a dinner during Leadership Development.



Charlene Lake, Senior VP of Public Affairs and Chief Sustainability Officer, with Natacha Kabandana, who owns an event planning company in Rwanda.

Brennan of the SEVEN Fund, the women uncovered ways that women business owners in war-torn and developing countries can capitalize on their circumstances and seize opportunities for growth. Among the obstacles the women identified included a lack of trust in government, lack of peace and general stability, broken banking systems, lack of advocacy for women businesses and civic responsibility.

Sakina Ibrahimi talked of the instability in Afghanistan.

“My country not being peaceful is a big problem for us,” she said. “We cannot depend on what will happen the next day.”

Mike encouraged the women with hope though, reassuring them that they can come up with some real solutions. In fact, he said, the work had only just begun. He challenged the women to spend their free time thinking of solutions.

With this charge, the women spent Thursday evening resting and brainstorming, preparing to spend a second day with Mike dedicated solely to finding solutions for their issues and how each of them can participate in implementing them.

On the last day of Leadership Development, Friday, the students hunkered down for one last time in the classroom ready to tackle solutions for the obstacles standing in the way of Afghan and Rwandan women business owners that they identified with Mike the day before. The delegations broke into focus groups by country to start drafting their document to present to their Ambassadors at the International Women’s Economic Summit.

These documents and presentations will serve as the first official step for these women to demonstrate a real commitment to helping rebuild their countries economically – from the issues up. When addressing government officials, in order to be effective, it’s critical to not point out just the problems; you must also identify and suggest potential solutions. This is exactly what our women will do on Tuesday.

Leadership Development has proven to be a great experience; not only for the Afghan and Rwandan students, but for all the sponsors, speakers, volunteers, educators and staff who have been involved

Marcelline Uwizeye, owner of B& M Style Boutique in Rwanda, said the experience helped her to mature.

“All the programs encouraged me and really made me think,” she said. “I used to think I would never grow big, but after listening to all these women, I feel older. They have lent me their wisdom.”



Manizha Wafeq and Farzana Ebrahimi, both graduates of PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS, work together in a focus group to identify obstacles and solutions for their country.

Parinaz Hissami, who works with a business development program in Afghanistan, says the information they received is critical.

“They are kind people, and I have learned so much.”

Bonita Mwunvaneza, owner of Sugar & Spice Cookie Bakery in Rwanda, said she can’t believe what a great experience it was ... even despite the jetlag.

“I can’t believe they kept us awake; all day, every day,” she said. “But we stayed alert the whole time, wanting to absorb all this information.”

On Saturday, June 12, with all their new information in hand, the students traveled across the United States to meet their American mentors, but we’ll save that part of the PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS story until next time, along with the outcomes and overview of our 2010 International Women’s Economic Summit, which starts today!

Warmest regards,

Terry Neese



*As always, a special thank you goes out to
our wonderful sponsors and partners!*