

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEI Celebrates 15 Years of Supporting Local Women Entrepreneurs Success Locally

As Women Entrepreneurs Institute's (WEI) annual networking gala approaches, WEI celebrates its 15th year of connecting local women business owners together and providing those women entrepreneurs with supportive resources through partnerships with small business and economic development organizations locally.

In 1994 Gabrielle Parkinson founded the organization, because she saw a need to bring women entrepreneurs, in various stages of their business, together to support each other's growth and success. "As a women business owner since 1985, I personally know how important it is to get support and inspiration from other women business owners -- encouragement, ideas, resources, referrals, opportunities to expand your network, etc. Building a community of women entrepreneurs through WEI continues to be a powerful resource, as well as providing opportunities to expand your business and personal relationships. I still benefit from the smart, savvy and fun business women I meet and associate with through WEI," said Parkinson.

Even before WEI, Parkinson had been working towards a common goal with other established women business owners in the community to bring supportive workshops and events to women entrepreneurs across the county. In 1985 Parkinson established a countywide support group for women business owners called "Business Connections." Prior to the official establishment of WEI, Parkinson developed the Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Project in 1992 and WE sponsored the first ever Women Entrepreneurs Conference in Humboldt County that same year. WE transformed into an official (501)(c) 3 nonprofit organization, called WEI (Women Entrepreneurs Institute) two years later, in 1994. Parkinson remains a stalwart leader in the organization, serving as the organization's president.

WEI is a unique nonprofit "without walls," meaning that the organization does not live in a physical office space and is completely run through volunteer efforts. WEI provides mentoring and support for local women just starting their own business, and those trying to grow their business to help keep Humboldt County's economic environment diverse and healthy. They have done this through various partnerships with local businesses and economic organizations, as well as through the two events they put on each year.

Women entrepreneurs interested in meeting other women business owners for support and inspiration can attend the upcoming WEI Annual Networking Gala happening, Thursday October 8th from 5:15pm to 8pm at the Avalon, 3rd and G Street in Eureka. Pre-registration is advised for a discounted price of \$30; space is limited. Visit www.women-entrepreneurs.org to pre-register. This event sponsored by Redwood Region Economic Development Commission (RREDC), the North Coast Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Arcata Economic Development Corporation (AEDC).