



Supplement: REAP Women's Business Center Year in Review

BY MONICA BRAUN, REAP WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER DIRECTOR

The REAP Women's Business Center entered its first year of sustainability funding in October, 2006. Through three-quarters of the year, REAP Business Specialists have provided 1,457 hours of business counseling to 235 clients. Seventy-six training opportunities have been provided and 1,288 have received training. Sixty-five percent of those trained were women. Approximately 45 start-up businesses have received assistance.

In response to concerns in our rural communities about loss of businesses as business owners retire, the REAP WBC collaborated with local economic development organizations and the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City-Omaha Branch to facilitate discussions about the importance of planning for Business Succession. Sessions were held in Ainsworth, Valentine, O'Neill, Elyria, and Nelson. Several more sessions are planned in the state for the coming year.

Collaboration continues with the University of Nebraska-Extension in providing eCommerce classes. Several were held in Spanish in the Northeast part of the state.

Local REAP Associations/Roundtables, though few in number, continue to provide that critical support system for each other as small business owners. They offer opportunities to learn about techniques, tools and skills to improve their businesses and benefit from the networking.

Since the decision was made to limit the *REAP Business Update* to quarterly issues, we have developed an email list of REAP members and supporters to ensure we are able to get timely information to our members. If you haven't provided us a current email address and wish to be included on our email list, please send an email to *Peggy Mahaney* (peggym@cfra.org) and request to be added to the list.

The REAP Women's Business Center was selected to participate in the Women and Company® Microenterprise Boost Program sponsored by the Citigroup Foundation and Women and Company® for the third year. Five low-to-moderate income women owned businesses were awarded \$2000 each to enhance their businesses. The winners were announced at the

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GROW Nebraska Spring Membership meeting in Holbrook, Neb. It was a great chance to provide recognition to our winners and offer them the opportunity to network with other small business owners and learn from the educational sessions held the same day. We plan to continue to collaborate with GROW Nebraska as both organizations strive to assist our business owners to grow and thrive!

The REAP WBC was pleased to receive a \$2,900 grant from The WealthSpring Fund, an affiliate of the Nebraska Community Foundation and funded through the Cooper Foundation. The WealthSpring Fund is a statewide fund dedicated to the economic self-sufficiency of women and their families.

One of the most requested training topics received by REAP Business Specialists is bookkeeping. We submitted a grant proposal to the WealthSpring Fund to develop a bookkeeping curriculum. The curriculum will assist low-to-moderate income women business owners to establish a solid foundation by having their bookkeeping system set up so it will function to assist them in being successful. We have enlisted the skills of *Connie Harvey*, owner of Efficiency Counts, Hastings, Nebraska, to assist in the curriculum development. We are excited to be able to develop this training and look forward to offering it in the coming year.

REAP staff continue to collaborate with other organizations and networks to provide information, training, and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners across Nebraska.



Connie Harvey, owner of Efficiency Counts, a Hastings, Nebraska, small business. Connie is helping REAP to design a new bookkeeping curriculum.