



OPEN



make mine a
million \$ business
www.makemineamillion.org



count me in
for women's economic independence

Media Contacts:

Alex Della Rocca
M Booth & Associates for
Count Me In and American Express OPEN
212-481-7000
alex.d@mbooth.com

Rosa M. Alfonso
American Express OPEN
212-640-1712
rosa.m.alfonso@aexp.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Carolina Women Join Elite Community of Million Dollar Minded Entrepreneurs

North Carolina Secretary of State Elaine Marshall and Lt. Governor Bev Perdue Provide Inspiration to Newest Make Mine a Million \$ Business™ Awardees

Charlotte – October 28, 2008 – The Make Mine a Million \$ Business program, a national movement inspiring women to grow their businesses, made its first-ever visit to North Carolina on October 7, 2008. Co-founded by Count Me In for Women’s Economic Independence and American Express OPENSM, the Make Mine a Million \$ Business program added 10 Carolina women to its community of growth-focused entrepreneurs and awarded them with money, marketing, mentoring and technology assistance.

Keynote speakers Secretary of State Elaine Marshall, the first woman elected to a statewide, executive branch office in North Carolina, and Lt. Governor Bev Perdue, who strives to bridge the economic gap between urban and rural North Carolina, praised the winners for providing inspiration and opportunities by creating jobs within their communities. They also expressed their enthusiasm for Carolina women entrepreneurs striving to reach their professional goals and for having such a positive impact on the state’s \$18 billion economy.

“Through the Make Mine a Million \$ Business program, women entrepreneurs are coming together to crash through the glass ceiling,” said Nell Merlino, Founder and President of Count Me In. “Our North Carolina awardees are joining a community of women who are eager to reach and surpass the million-dollar threshold.”

Fewer than 3% of the country’s more than ten million women-owned businesses gross more than \$1 million in revenue. The Make Mine a Million \$ Business program is committed to inspiring one million women business owners to grow their businesses to \$1 million in revenue.

The all-day business event at the Blake Hotel in Charlotte was open to applicants from both North Carolina and South Carolina. Nineteen finalists were selected from 250 applicants. Each finalist gave a three minute elevator pitch before a panel of judges and a live audience. Ten women were awarded business growth packages based on their ability to build a \$1 million business within two years and join a growing class of 160 Make Mine a Million \$ Business awardees.

“We are committed to helping increase the number of thriving, women-owned businesses nationwide”, said Sarika Sangwan, Manager of Advocacy Marketing at American Express OPEN. “Fulfilling our goal of helping one million women reach \$1 million in revenues can contribute hundreds of billions of dollars to the US economy.”

Carolina Awardees:

The following 10 women join an elite community of women entrepreneurs and will receive the tools necessary for propelling their businesses to the \$1 million mark:

- **Jan Allison** of Winston-Salem, NC-based **Carolina On-Site Fleet Services, Inc.**, which provides on-site vehicle maintenance to businesses with fleets of vehicles
- **Elizabeth Casazza** of Ocean Isle, NC-based **AquaVida USA** (www.aquavidausa.com), which manufactures and sells a Body Detox System that uses an ionization process to encourage the body to release toxins
- **Barbra Denison** of Durham, NC-based **Cranky Creative Group** (www.crankycreative.com), which specializes in cutting – edge media that makes use of unused advertising space
- **Virginia Jones** of Laurinburg, NC-based **Kinetic Electric Group LLC** (www.kinetic-electric.net), an electrical contracting group serving the military, institutions and commercial customers
- **Lia Lucero** of Cornelius, NC-based **Showpiece Enterprises, Inc.** (www.showpieceenterprises.com), which specializes in Eco-Interactive Marketing Solutions. Showpiece designs and produces trade show exhibits, point of purchase displays, retail interiors, anywhere your customer comes face to face with your business, out of environmentally responsible materials.
- **Carrie DeWitt-Partello** of Shallotte, NC-based **East Coast Moving LLC** (www.eastcoastmovingllc.com), an experienced and professional packing, loading and transport service for household and/or commercial goods into and out of the state of North Carolina
- **Dr. Angela Bright Pearson** of Sanford, NC-based **Bright Audiology** (www.brightaudiology.com), a hearing rehabilitation center that serves all ages by assisting individuals with hearing loss
- **Zoe Schmidinger** of Sugar Mountain, NC-based **Maple's Leather Furniture Inc.** (www.maplesleather.com), a retail leather furniture showroom and internet company that offers custom leather furniture which can be shipped nationwide
- **Lisa Shock** of Roxboro, NC-based **Roxboro Family Medicine & Immediate Care**, a family owned practice providing quality, compassionate care to patients of all ages
- **Kristie Byrum** of Greenville, SC-based **Byrum Innovation Group, Inc.** (www.byruminnovation.com), a strategic marketing and communications firm specializing in helping innovative technology companies achieve their business objectives

Awardees received:

- Inspiration, community, financing and mentoring from a “dream” team of coaches and business experts from Count Me In
- Platinum Business Cash Rebate Credit Card, a financial health analysis, and possible promotion in marketing and media campaigns from American Express OPEN
- A Financial Makeover and Spa Gift Basket from AIG – a holistic diagnosis from a personal financial coach to secure your future.
- A Dell shopping spree worth \$1000
- Discounts from FedEx select shipping and office and print services
- A One year business membership to a Sam's Club

Upcoming Make Mine a Million \$ Business Events:

- ◆ **Ft. Lauderdale, Florida - December 11, 2008**
Open to women business owners **Nationwide**

To apply or join the Make Mine a Million \$ Business community, please visit:
www.makemineamillion.org.

About Count Me In

Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence is the leading national not-for-profit provider of resources, business education and community support for women entrepreneurs seeking to grow micro businesses to million dollar enterprises. Count Me In launched the

Make Mine a Million \$ Business™ and Micro to Millions™ programs to inspire women entrepreneurs to build sustainable enterprises, create jobs and develop innovative products and services. For more information visit: www.countmein.org.

About American Express OPENSM

American Express OPEN is dedicated exclusively to the success of small business owners and their companies. OPEN supports business owners with exceptional service. With tailored products and services, the team delivers purchasing power, flexibility, control and rewards to help customers run their business. Specifically, business owner customers can leverage an enhanced set of products, tools, services and savings, including charge and credit cards, convenient access to working capital, robust online account management capabilities and savings on business services from an expanded lineup of partners. To obtain more information about OPENSM, visit OPEN.com, or call 1-800-NOW-OPEN to apply for a card or loan. Terms and conditions apply.

American Express Company www.americanexpress.com is a leading global payments, network and travel company founded in 1850.

#