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Women's Initiative business students graduate prepared for success

From the Globe Business Desk

On Thursday 24 enthusiastic students graduated from the Women's Initiative's ownership program, a 20-session class de-

signed to build the entrepreneurial capacity of women who are starting or expanding their businesses.

The Alameda Free Library's all-purpose room was filled to ca-

capacity with proud and hopeful graduates and their families and friends, who cheered and clapped for their loved ones as the students presented 30-second commercials about their businesses.

dream of business ownership. Graduates have started and expanded over 1,600 businesses, from photography studios and catering companies to mechanic shops. In 2006, 301 new jobs



PHOTOS BY Z'MA WYATT

2008 graduates (not in order): Brenda Bracy, Mrs. Bree's It's So Good Pies; Angie Chavez, Big Bra+; Chalyn Coleman, Mahogany Manes; Mary Conrad, En Provence; LaDonna Evangelista, Blue Leaf Company; Mary Lemmon, Live Now Therapy; Ericka Means, Honey Girl; Jacqueline Shelton, Grandma-ma's Family Day Care; Marina Stallworth, Sew Cute Studio; Rebecca Stevens, Ladybug Café; Ming Wong, QQ Art; Nyia Andrews, Jewels of Life; Janet Co, Diwa; Valarie Espinoza-Ross, Spa-bulous; Erin Fisher, Blyssful Petals; Edi Gillery, Gateway to Independence; Jaimie Harris, Freedom Space; Maia Huang, Healing Arts Psychotherapy; LaTasha Jules, event planner; Holly Le Du, Café Camino; Crystal Martin, 4LM Consulting; Felicia Smith, It's All In The Hands; Keyana "Meeno" Stallworth, Lucky Ink Professional Services (LIPS); and Angela Wilkerson, Angel's Choice.



Globe Associate Publisher and Managing Editor Eleanor Boswell-Raine delivered the keynote address during the Women's Initiative graduation celebration on June 12.

Women's Initiative helps women overcome economic and social barriers and achieve self-sufficiency by providing them with financial support and training in business.

Since 1988, the Bay Area program has assisted high-potential low-income women who

were created by the program's graduates.

Globe Associate Publisher and Managing Editor Eleanor Boswell-Raine delivered the keynote address, in which she shared her business experiences successes and challenges, and

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gave encouragement to the graduates.

She concluded her speech with these words: "You and I have something in common: We laid a new track and got on track. We decided that yesterday was gone and today had promise, so we chose to step out of yesterday, and that's how we got here today. God bless you as you move forward into your futures."

During the ceremony, small business trainers Teresa Miller and Shannon Penn presented each graduate with a diploma and a congratulatory award from California Senate President pro Tem Don Perata.

After students graduate from the Women's Initiative program, they can obtain ongoing support from SuccessLink, which connects them with influential women in business through seminars and coaching.

Scholarships and stipends for childcare and transportation are available for very low-in-



PHOTO BY Z'MA WYATT

come women to ensure that no one is turned away for lack of financial resources.

Women's Initiative administers a revolving loan fund, disbursing loans ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000, and links

women with asset building opportunities, including matched savings accounts called Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), through which participants have the potential to double their savings for capital in-

vestments.

For more information, visit www.womensinitiative.org. Classes are offered in San Francisco, Oakland, San Rafael, Richmond, Concord and San Jose. ©