



Girl Power

YOUNG WOMEN LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO START A BUSINESS.

This is part one of an occasional series on entrepreneurial women giving back to their communities.

IN JUNE, the Women Presidents' Organiza-

tion put on a nationwide event that brought together women entrepreneurs and elementary-age girls in 11 cities from Phoenix to Toronto, all to play the game Cashflow for Kids. WPO members served as facilitators, and mentors, helping the girls learn lessons in financial literacy.

Sharon Lechter—co-creator of the Cashflow game, co-author of *Rich Dad Poor Dad* and longtime WPO member—was delighted to see her vision in action at the event at the Sam's Club in Secaucus, New Jersey.

Encouraging the women entrepreneurs of tomorrow and teaching girls is her passion, says Lechter. "In school, kids are trained that there's one right answer, which closes minds and stifles entrepreneurship."

It's a vision WPO founder and president Marsha Firestone connected with immediately in her search for a nationally coordinated event to correspond with the organization's 10th anniversary. "As we approached our anniversary, WPO members wanted to give back in a meaningful way that fit with our mission of accelerating

and enhancing the growth of women-owned businesses," says Firestone.

At first, the girls struggled to understand some advanced topics. But then something clicked—and they started playing *and* learning as if by second nature. Destiny Ledesna, 8, hit a pivotal moment when she had to decide to pay for an item by cash or credit card. Her instinct said to charge it, but when she realized that would add to her monthly expenses, she opted to pay cash. The girls began to realize the benefits of acquiring securities, real estate and the all-coveted business asset cards.

Jean Oursler, 40, WPO facilitator and owner of Livingston, New Jersey-based consulting firm J. Alden & Co., credits the game with changing her own business—and life. "As a girl, I was never taught a thing about finances," says Oursler. "I first played [the adult version of] this game two years ago, and now I'm [using it] to teach my daughter."

At the end of the event, each girl got to take home a Cashflow for Kids game if they promised, pay-it-forward style, to teach 10 other girls how to play. "This game is an inspiration," says Desiree Kearney, 12, who adds that she and her friends, Casey and Jocelyn Cabrera, already own a crafts business and, as a result of the event, planned to add to their empire by creating a board game and writing a book.

Lechter looks over the tables of girls learning about finances and bonding with women entrepreneurs and is noticeably touched. "This," she says, "is what it's all about."

—JANEAN CHUN

If you know of an inspiring woman entrepreneur or organization helping girls learn about entrepreneurship, e-mail Aliza Pilar Sherman-Risdahl at alizapilar@msn.com.

Head start:

Jean Oursler knows it's important to teach girls about finances early on.

GET NOTICED: Do you know an entrepreneur who deserves to be recognized for her accomplishments? (Maybe it's you?) OPEN from American Express and *Entrepreneur* magazine will honor one outstanding woman entrepreneur as Woman of the Year at the "Women in Charge: Winning Strategies for Women Business Owners" all-day conference in Miami on January 29, 2008. For more details and to enter, visit entrepreneur.com/womanoftheyear. The deadline for entry is September 15, 2007.

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