

Distaff meeting

NJ Conference for Women attracting business leaders of the present and the future

Lorraine Holcombe remembers the day in 2011 when she got a call from Lucia Stegaru and Mary Betz of PNC Bank, asking if the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce wanted to start a women's business group.

They agreed to set a date for an evening event at the Nassau Street branch of PNC Bank, and invited Terry Adams, of Adams Consulting Group, to speak about the different ways men and women go about networking. Then they sent out invitations and waited.

Somewhat to their surprise, 125 women showed up, and with that, WIBA—the Women in Business Alliance, a Princeton Chamber committee—was born.

On Oct. 16, WIBA will host the fourth annual New Jersey Conference for Women—formerly known as the Women's Leadership Conference—

a networking and educational event designed with only women in mind. Scheduled speakers include Karen Finerman of CNBC's *Fast Money*, Mercadien Group managing director Marguerite L. Mount, and Nancy Armstrong of MAKERS—Women Who Make America.

WIBA began with monthly meetings and a plan to host quarterly events for women in the local business community. "It started growing and growing to the point where the committee decided we needed to do more," Holcombe said in a recent interview. So in 2012, they held the first Women's Leadership Conference at the Princeton Marriott. The event sold out, with 300 women attending.

"We decided to create the conference because women were looking for leadership opportunities, for education, for professional development," said Holcombe, who is managing director of WIBA. "They also wanted a spot where they can collaborate with business community leaders and advocates for women's issues."

Each year a WIBA subcommittee See CONFERENCE, Page 9



Holcombe

CONFERENCE continued from Page 7 is tasked with finding speakers and themes for the conference. They survey their membership and people who have attended in previous years to see what topics are on everyone's minds. Not surprisingly, several of this year's talks and breakout sessions will be focused on social media.

Guest speaker Erika Jacoby will be giving tips on optimizing LinkedIn profiles, while Sarah Cerilli, marketing manager at Withum Smith and Brown, will give a presentation on phone apps that can make one's work life easier. Other topics will include negotiating a job offer, giving better presentations and healthy eating.

This year's conference will be held at the Westin Hotel in Forrestal Village, and Holcombe said the committee expects around 500 to 600 attendees from across the state. Attendees of all ages and in all stages of their careers—from recent college graduate to retirement age—typically attend.

This year, thanks to Operation Reinvent, which aims to help ex-military personnel re-enter the workforce, a number

of veterans will be in attendance.

"I like the conference to be a place where you are inspired and a place where you are empowered and feel good about yourself when you leave," Holcombe said. "It's going to be inspirational to see these women."

On the occasion of the New Jersey Conference for Women, the Princeton Echo interviewed several women who are prominent leaders in the Princeton community. In addition to Mayor Liz Lempert, we also talked to Judy Hutton of the Princeton YWCA, Piper Burrows of SAVE, Krystal Knapp of Planet Princeton and Mollie Marcoux and Courtney Banghart from the Princeton University Athletics Department.

We asked them to tell us about key moments in their careers—moments when their leadership skills were called upon—and we asked them to give us some advice for aspiring business leaders. Their profiles appear on the next several pages.

More information about the NJ Conference for Women, including how to register, is online at njconferenceforwomen.org. —J.E.