

NAWBO's award-winning female entrepreneurs

By Debra Costner

Each year, the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO®-SF) accepts nominations for their Entrepreneur of the Year Awards celebrated at the Leaders and Legends Luncheon, to recognize exceptional female business owners in the Bay Area. This year, I was honored to be asked to sit on the panel to select the award winners. The task was not a simple one.

The nominees were all accomplished entrepreneurs, articulate and passionate about their businesses. As we questioned each woman, they articulated a vision that came from a desire to create a unique and valuable product that would benefit society and/or make a contribution to the community. Each one had created a successful business, and they all are winners in their own way.

The selection committee had some lively discussions, in some cases each representing a different candidate they felt deserved to win the award this year. That certainly says much about the quality of the nominees. But in the end, we had to choose the winners in each category. And so we are thrilled to present the winners of NAWBO®-SF's 2008 Entrepreneur of the Year Awards.

Trailblazer

Jesse Ziff Cool: founder and owner CoolEatz Restaurants and Catering

Starting as a waitress for the Good Earth Restaurant, Ziff Cool always had an interest in creating delicious organic food — before it became trendy to do so. When she opened her first restaurant, she didn't list "organic" on the menu, out of fear that no one

would order the food! How the times have changed.

Truly a trailblazer, for the past 33 years, Ziff Cool has been dedicated to



Jesse Ziff Cool, founder and owner CoolEatz Restaurants and Catering

sustainable agriculture and cuisine. Knowing where food comes from, and how best to prepare it, is paramount in her personal and professional life. Her businesses support local, organic farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and dairies — her "heroes" as she warmly refers to them. They even compost 94 percent of their restaurant waste, and use compostable products for to-go containers.

Over the years Ziff Cool has opened nine restaurants — and she currently owns three in the South Bay: Cool Café, Flea Street Cafe and jZCool Eatery and Wine Bar. She also runs

CoolEatz Catering Company as a side business. Ziff Cool has authored seven cookbooks, published many magazine articles and has been featured on television shows, including *The Today Show* and *The Food Network*.

Rising Star

Laura van Galen: founder and CEO of Bleu Marketing Solutions

With an impressive client list that includes Apple, Citicorp, Omaha Steaks and Pitney Bowes, there is no doubt that Laura van Galen knows her stuff. As an authoritative direct marketer, she understands the woven fabrics of customer acquisition and customer retention marketing, and brings more than 22 years of domestic and international success in this field.

In 2001, after four years heading up a list management division of a leading firm, van Galen decided to strike out on her own. She founded Bleu Marketing Solutions, Inc., an agency focused on supporting large businesses to acquire new customers through offline and online list marketing. She opened her offices with the generous offer of an uncle for free rent, and nothing more than credit card advances to get her started. Seven years later the company is not only thriving, but enjoys enviable profitability and consistent annual growth.

Although van Galen's company is small (just 25 employees), she plays in the arena with big business. Provid-



Mimi Silbert, president and CEO of Delancey Street Foundation

restaurants, a lucrative Christmas tree sales business, and more. Those businesses create funding for the organization while also providing vocational skills and teaching discipline to the residents. Delancey Street is considered a pioneer in the realm of social entrepreneurship!

Silbert never anticipated the success and growth over the years, or that she would be running five centers around the country. In addition to San Francisco (the original), they have facilities in Los Angeles, New York, North Carolina and New Mexico.

Her vision has provided more than 15,000 successful graduates with academic, vocational, and social skills, plus the values and attitude they need to live in society legitimately and successfully.

Silbert has dedicated her life to working with society's outcasts, to prove her belief that with determination, courage, and discipline, ex-felons can be transformed into valuable members of society. She has turned impossible dreams into reality by creating a place where by pooling resources and supporting one another, they can live with purpose and integrity.

Member of the Year

Cynthia Fassler, founder TSS Personnel Agency, Inc.

Serving on the NAWBO San Francisco Chapter Board, Cynthia Fassler has been the event chair for the annual Leaders and Legends Awards Luncheon for the past two years. She has dedicated exemplary time and energy to help its members to grow, thrive and lead, with enthusiasm and great spirit.

Fassler founded TSS as a temporary staffing agency in 1982, and quickly expanded to offer full-time placement and executive search services. With her expertise and personal determination in recruitment, she has successfully grown the agency to have a niche in the executive search market, focusing on banking and brokerage placement. In 2006 Fassler was named "Small Business Owner of the Year" by the Small Business Network.

Come to the Awards Luncheon

All of these accomplished women business owners will be honored and receive their awards on Friday, May 2 in San Francisco. Come to the 24th Annual NAWBO®-SF Leaders and Legends Women Entrepreneurs of the Year Awards Luncheon at the Westin St. Francis Hotel. Join Mistress of Ceremonies Jan Wahl and Keynote Speaker San Francisco District Attorney, Kamala Harris, and celebrate these female entrepreneurs who exemplify excellence!

For more information or to register go to www.nawbo-sf.com ▲



Laura van Galen, founder and CEO of Bleu Marketing Solutions

ing high-end, high-quality services, with quick turn-around time and at an affordable price, she has distinguished herself from the competition. Part of that success she credits to Bleu's mentor program, training and molding young adults in this field — and ultimately hiring 90 percent of them to work for her.

Bleu Marketing Solutions, Inc. was also honored as one of the fastest growing companies in the Management Consulting Services industry by *Inc. Magazine* in 2007.

Social Entrepreneur

Dr. Mimi Silbert, president and CEO of Delancey Street Foundation

For 35 years, Dr. Mimi Silbert has lived in close quarters with ex-felons, raising her two sons under the same roof and rules that this halfway house demands of its residents. She is the epitome of the "social entrepreneur," making helping those most in need her life's work.

Her idea was truly unique: create a non-profit rehabilitation program serving ex-felons, prostitutes and substance abusers that would be self-funding and therefore be of no cost to the clients or the taxpayers.

Over the years Silbert's vision blossomed, and now Delancey Street operates a well-known moving company,

The National Association of Women Business Owners San Francisco Bay Area Chapter presents

24TH ANNUAL NAWBO® LEADERS & Legends LUNCHEON



TRAILBLAZER
Jesse Ziff Cool
CoolEatz



RISING STAR
Laura van Galen
Bleu Marketing Solutions, Inc.

AND THE 4TH ANNUAL NAWBO UNIVERSITY FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2008



SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR
Mimi Silbert
Delancey Street Foundation



MEMBER OF THE YEAR
Cindy Fassler
TSS Personnel Agency, Inc.

The Westin St. Francis, San Francisco
NAWBO-U: 8:00am – 11:15am
Exhibits & Networking 11:00am -12:00pm
Awards Luncheon: 12:00pm – 2:00pm

Registration: www.nawbo-sf.org
e-mail: leadersandlegends@nawbo-sf.org
Phone: 415.333.2130

Our theme is "Hats off to Women" so wear your favorite hat!

Join us for our premier event celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit!



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Kamala Harris
Former State Senator



MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES
Jan Wahl
TV & Radio Commentator

CALIFORNIA BANK TRUST

UNION BANK OF CALIFORNIA

Chevron

WELLS FARGO

SAN FRANCISCO Business Times BAY AREA BUSINESS WOMAN

CITY NATIONAL BANK The way up.