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NAWBO's award-winning female entrepreneurs

By Debra Costner



Mimi Silbert, president and CEO of Delancey Street Foundation

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, 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.

