



## **WIN Event is a Sellout – and a Success**

### **May 14, 2007...Immediate Release:**

The inaugural Women's Industry Network (WIN) conference, held April 29-May 1 in Phoenix, Arizona, featured 115 attendees, the vast majority of them women. Event planners had predicted 100 would attend. Attendees came from more than a dozen states and Canada.

"It was a huge success," said Sheila Loftus, WIN's executive director. Attendees, she noted, ranged from "students to CEOs. We had women painters, body techs, sales managers, vice presidents, shop owners, managers, and human resource personnel."

The conference featured presentations by industry consultants Matthew Ohrnstein and Marcy Tieger of Symphony Advisors, State Farm claims vice president Susan Hood, Enterprise Rent-a-Car vice president Mary Mahoney, and Laura Angell, a vocational instructor at Warren Tech in Colorado. The conference also featured panels on how to recruit and retain women in the collision repair industry and successful strategies for women in business.

"The WIN events were a mixture of networking and educational seminars and speakers," Loftus said. "Everything at the conference was designed to help women advance in this industry."

Hood shared her five lessons of leadership, which led to her business success.

Angell encouraged attendees to get involved in their local vocational schools, which are generally underfunded. "If you work with the schools, you'll have the inside track for getting recruits," she said.

Mahoney shared with attendees the secret to Enterprise's success: Treat customers like your neighbor, and take care of your employees. Growth and profitability, she said, would follow.

During one of the panel discussions, Gigi Walker, a California body shop owner, encouraged women to "teach the male staff to be receptive to having women on the shop floor. There are

women who would like to go out in the shop. Make the shop a respectable place for any person to work.”

On the day following the panel, WIN attendees developed a list of ideas to attract women to the collision repair industry. They included being present at career days, creating pleasant work environments, speaking with students, and hosting family-friendly open houses.

Entertainment at the conference's gala dinner included a 13-member, all-women mariachi band.

One of the attendees summed up the spirit of the entire conference in a single word: sisterhood.

In addition to hosting the conference, WIN announced its board of directors, which includes four executive officers: Geralynn Kottschade of Jerry's Body Shop in Mankato, Minn., chair; Kathy Mello of TGIF Body Shop in Fremont, Calif., vice chair; Trish Serratore of ASE in Leesburg, Va., treasurer; and Gigi Walker of Walker's Auto Body and Fleet Repair in Concord, Calif., secretary, Frederica Carter of Akzo Nobel Coatings in Norcross, Ga.; Marcy Tieger of Symphony Advisors in Irvine, Calif. Catherine Babiari of Ontario, Canada, is WIN's international director. WIN's executive director is Sheila Loftus. Eventually, WIN will have a board of directors of 12. For those interested in serving on the WIN board of directors, download an application at [www.womensindustrynetwork.com](http://www.womensindustrynetwork.com).

WIN is a not-for-profit association dedicated to encouraging, developing, and cultivating opportunities to attract women to collision repair while recognizing excellence, promoting leadership, and fostering a network among the women who are shaping the industry.

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