



make **mine** a
million \$ business
www.makemineamillion.org

 **count me in**
for women's economic independence

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**Women Entrepreneurs Launch Year-Long Race to
Stimulate Economy and Create Jobs**

*“Start it, save it or grow it” Becomes Rallying Cry for Make Mine a Million \$ Business
Community Galvanized by M3 RACE*

New York, NY – January 30, 2009 – Count Me In for Women’s Economic Independence, the leading national not-for-profit provider of business resources and community support for women entrepreneurs, with founding sponsor American Express OPEN, announce the launch of the Make Mine a Million \$ Business RACE (M3 RACE) – a year-long business growth marathon bringing together thousands of women entrepreneurs to network online and compete in a race to grow their businesses and create jobs in the United States.

“Start it, save it or grow it” is a mantra started by the Make Mine a Million \$ Business RACE team that is providing a platform for women to start new businesses, offering lifelines to those businesses looking for help, and supplying healthy businesses with resources to grow to the next level. Every new business creates a minimum of one job, addressing a critical need in these challenging economic times. The M3 RACE is addressing economic turmoil and joblessness head-on and empowering women business owners to be a driving growth engine for the U.S. economy.

Women own more than 10 million businesses, yet only 2.6% or 242,000 report more than \$1 million in revenue, with the majority generating revenues below \$50,000¹. All across America, women entrepreneurs are ready to do their part to stimulate the economy by building their businesses, starting new ventures, and creating jobs in every community across the country.

The M3 RACE inspires women to challenge themselves and each other to realize their vision for the company and reach their revenue targets. Just like walk/run marathons, women can choose their own pace for their 2009 business revenue goal: \$250,000, \$500,000, or \$1,000,000 or more. The Grand Prize winner will receive a \$100,000 cash prize and a year of marketing, advertising and media opportunities. The judging criteria include both quantitative business metrics as well as qualitative assessments of business

¹ Data source: US Census Bureau. Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners: Women-Owned Firms, 2002. Published January 2006. (SB02-00CS-WMN).

potential. Runner-up winners from all 50 states and in 15 business sectors will receive a prize package including one-on-one business coaching, technology products, media exposure, access to new markets, and products and services to help them manage their families and households. M3 Racers will also gain valuable perspectives on entrepreneurship and its critical role in today's economy from Count Me In founder and chief executive officer Nell Merlino's business blog at www.readersdigest.com.

Women can join the M3 RACE by logging on to www.makemineamillion.org. Registration will remain open until June 30, 2009. The M3 RACE ends on midnight, December 31, 2009 and winners will be announced in February 2010.

“Rosie the Riveter called 20 million women into the factories to support the economy and contribute to the war effort during World War II,” said Merlino. “In 2009, ‘Ellie the Entrepreneur’ is poised to help the country’s economic recovery by creating jobs, growing businesses and securing their families’ futures.”

According to the last US Census, there are 1.8 million women entrepreneurs who make up the “missing middle,” women who are in striking distance of \$1 million and have revenues of \$250,000 to \$750,000. On average, these women hire three to six people when they grow to \$1 million in revenue. The M3 RACE is a nationwide campaign that aims to empower 175,000 women entrepreneurs to reach their revenue goals, which could help create 500,000 new jobs over the next three years.

What do women receive by joining the M3 RACE?

- Count Me In's online business growth assessment tool to help participants identify where their business stands and what they need to reach their 2009 goal
- Digital financial dashboard, underwritten by founding sponsor American Express OPEN, that enables participants to privately track growth and manage key business metrics including: sales figures, employee counts, debt load, net worth, and more
- Marketing opportunities in new national markets with partners like American Express OPEN, FedEx, Dell, Sam’s Club, and Reader’s Digest
- PR opportunities for promotion through local and national TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, and blogs
- Prizes and national recognition for crossing personal finish line, as well as the chance to win a Grand Prize of \$100,000 cash and national advertising

“A million-dollar mindset requires a clear goal and a serious plan to go about achieving it,” said Susan Sobott, president, American Express OPEN. “The online business growth assessment, digital financial dashboard and M3 RACE will provide women entrepreneurs the tools and confidence they need. Growing their businesses will create new opportunities for themselves, for new and existing employees and their communities.”

15 Women Entrepreneurs Awarded in Florida Help Jump-Start M3 RACE

Leading the way for women in the M3 RACE are 15 business owners who received Make Mine a Million \$ Business awards at an event held on December 11th, 2008 at the Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa in Hollywood, FL.

From 2005 to 2008, the Make Mine a Million \$ Business Program hosted competitions in 20 cities and provided crucial business growth resources – money, marketing, mentoring and technology to 175 women entrepreneurs who best demonstrated their ability to build a million-dollar business within two years. Last year, 33% of the awardees crossed the million-dollar threshold.

By leveraging social networking and creating an innovative online business growth assessment tool specific to the needs and challenges of women business owners, the 2009 M3 RACE initiative will extend its reach to thousands of women across the country.

The following 15 women were selected as Make Mine a Million \$ Business awardees at the Hollywood event:

- **Dr. Vimala Anishetty** of Detroit, MI-based **Environmental Compliance Office, Inc (ECO)**(www.ecomain.com), an environmental engineering services firm that provides manufacturing and other facilities to achieve and maintain compliance with environmental and safety laws, regulations and standards
- **Rebekah Dressler** of Lake Charles, LA-based **505 Imports** (www.505imports.com), an import furniture store of exotic hardwood furniture that is custom handmade in India and Indonesia
- **Lisa Lange and Gretchen Winterbottom** of Camden, NJ-based **eMergent Benefit Solutions, LLC** (www.emergentbenefits.com), a firm specializing in employee benefits consulting services, business process reengineering and implementation services
- **Lisa Longo** of Phoenixville, PA-based **Earth Mart** (www.earthmartonline.com), an environmental department store that specializes in environmentally-friendly, energy-saving, recycled, sustainable and/or fair trade produced products
- **Cristina Martinez** of Pearland, TX -based **Mad Klik, Inc** (www.rainbowpages.net), a Texas corporation that owns two DBA's; MD Marketing & Advertising and The Gay & Lesbian Rainbow Pages. They provide businesses with the ability to target and cater to the professional and upscale gay & lesbian consumer
- **Christine McDannell** of San Diego, CA-based **Cleanology, Inc.** (www.Cleanologysd.com), an eco-friendly house cleaning company servicing residential homes
- **Emily McHugh** of Fort Pierce, FL-based **Casauri** (www.casauri.com), designs stylish and colorful laptop cases for women and style-conscious men, as well as travel bags, totes, wheeled bags, and tech accessories, including iPod cases and cell phone cases
- **Penny McPherson** of Chadbourn, NC-based **McPherson Greenhouses Inc.**, a wholesale-only company servicing the needs of commercial landscapers and garden centers by contracting and growing annual plant color

- **Evelyn Parkes** of West Palm Beach, FL-based **Evelyn Parkes CPA PA**, a public accounting firm providing tax return preparation and retirement plan audits to individuals and small to medium sized businesses
- **Tena Payne** of Leeds, AL-based **Earthborn Studios, Inc.** (www.earthbornpottery.net), creator of functional one-of-a-kind pottery for high-end chefs and other upscale hospitality settings
- **Debra Reed and Cheryl Talaber** of DeLand, FL-based **Liberty IRB, Inc.** (www.libertyirb.com), an independent institutional review board (IRB) established to provide review of clinical research while protecting the welfare and dignity of human research subjects
- **Pamela Robinson** of Atlanta, GA-based **Financial Voyages LLC** (www.teamfv.com), a CFO solutions company specializing in business analysis and decision support
- **Trudy Scherting** of Bellingham, WA-based **Moka Joe Inc.** (www.mokajoe.com), a socially and environmentally dedicated business that produces premium roasted 100% Fair Trade Certified Organic Coffee that is sustainably grown.
- **Denise Newton and Ursula Szajna** of Oakland, NJ-based **Rapid Tag & Label, Inc.** (www.rapidtags.com), an eco-friendly house cleaning company servicing residential homes
- **Ursula Trainor** of Canoga Park, CA-based **Brianna Babywear Inc.** (www.briannababy.com), a manufacturer and multi-channel retailer of high-quality children's clothing and accessories with 110 boutiques across the country

About Count Me In

Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence is the leading national not-for-profit provider of resources, business education and community support for women entrepreneurs seeking to grow micro businesses to million dollar enterprises. Count Me In launched Make Mine a Million \$ Business® to inspire one million women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses to a million dollars in revenue by providing tools, skills and the support of a nation-wide community of peers.

About American Express OPENSM

American Express OPEN is dedicated exclusively to the success of small business owners and their companies. OPEN supports business owners with exceptional service. With tailored products and services, the team delivers purchasing power, flexibility, control and rewards to help customers run their business. Specifically, business owner customers can leverage an enhanced set of products, tools, services and savings, including charge and credit cards, convenient access to working capital, robust online account management capabilities and savings on business services from an expanded lineup of partners. To obtain more information about OPENSM, visit OPEN.com, or call 1-800-NOW-OPEN to apply for a card or loan. Terms and conditions apply.

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