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## NAWBO-LA ONLINE NEWSLETTER JUNE 2008 ISSUE

**Welcome!** to the NAWBO-LA ONLINE NEWSLETTER, a vehicle for communication for the National Association of Women Business Owners - Los Angeles Chapter (NAWBO-LA).

In this issue, we introduce you to NAWBO-LA's new interim CEO, update you on NAWBO-LA membership and advocacy news, and provide experts' insights on how to not only survive, but thrive, during and after an economic downturn. Stay tuned as we continue to bring you the information you need to strengthen and grow your business!

### [Interim CEO Takes the Helm at NAWBO-LA](#)

*Renowned nonprofit executive to guide the organization, as board leadership and staff continue their outstanding work*

### [NAWBO-LA Membership Rises to New Heights](#)

*Chapter wins NAWBO National Membership Drive Award, as more women business owners become part of, benefit from and contribute to the NAWBO-LA community*

### [Leaders Establish Presence During National Advocacy Trip](#)

*Jane Skeeter and Daphne Anneet make the voice of women business owners heard as part of Access Washington, D.C., and encourage members to attend the upcoming Access Sacramento*

### [Experts Offer Strategies to Manage and Thrive in the Current Economy](#)

*Despite the downturn, small and mid-sized businesses can find opportunities for growth and lay the groundwork for a more prosperous future*

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### **About the NAWBO-LA Online Newsletter**

*In each issue of the NAWBO-LA Online Newsletter, we strive to provide timely and valuable information and resources to the entrepreneurial community and share our mission of empowering and inspiring women entrepreneurs into economic, social and political spheres of leadership. The NAWBO-LA Online Newsletter is published six times yearly by NAWBO-LA and written by Mindy Berman/Mindy F. Berman Communications. The publication months are February, April, June, August, October and December. NAWBO-LA's Online Newsletter editor may be reached at [newsletter@nawbola.org](mailto:newsletter@nawbola.org).*

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**Interim CEO Takes the Helm at NAWBO-LA**

*Renowned nonprofit executive to guide the organization, as board leadership and staff continue their outstanding work*



Helen Han



Patricia Murar

Patricia Murar, a well-known leader with approximately 30 years of experience in nonprofit and business management, recently joined NAWBO-LA as interim CEO. She replaced Helen Han, who has been named interim executive director of NAWBO National.

Murar most recently worked at the Women's Foundation of California after leading The Los Angeles Women's Foundation and The Women's Foundation in San Francisco through a merger into a statewide organization. Previously, she spent 17 years at the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, culminating in her role as executive vice president in 1995-96.

Earlier in her career, Murar gained community development experience with a City Council field office. She also has served as an adjunct professor at California State University, Northridge, in nonprofit management, and as a faculty member with United Way of America's National Academy of Volunteerism.

"We're truly thrilled to welcome Patty Murar to the NAWBO-LA team," said Board President Laura Yamanaka. "As a true 'stateswoman' well-known in Los Angeles and women's business advocacy circles, she brings to NAWBO-LA tremendous experience in transition management, board and donor relations, nonprofit governance, team building, collaboration and much more."

Yamanaka added that a formal, disciplined search for candidates for a full-time CEO already is underway, as the NAWBO-LA board and staff ensure that the organization's programs and services continue to be delivered at the highest level.

"I want to thank the NAWBO-LA and Enterprise Institute of NAWBO-LA board members for their commitment during this transition, and also recognize the outstanding NAWBO-LA staff for their continued dedication to the success of women entrepreneurs," Yamanaka said. "At the same time, I want to provide a heartfelt thank you to Helen Han for her five years of leadership at NAWBO-LA, during which time she elevated the organization in its mission to propel women entrepreneurs into greater economic, social and political spheres of power."

**National Award for NAWBO-LA President**



Laura Yamanaka

While the NAWBO-LA board members work with Murar, they're also rising to new heights themselves.

The firm co-owned by Yamanaka, teamCFO, Inc., recently received one of just three national Asian Business Leadership Awards at the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Asian American Business Conference in Washington, D.C.

Yamanaka and teamCFO co-owner Carrie Tsang-Hidding accepted the honor, presented by Wells Fargo and the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation. The recipients were selected from a nationwide pool of applicants and evaluated based on their innovation, financial success and community service.

Yamanaka's and Tsang-Hidding's firm provides customized onsite chief financial officer (CFO) services for small and mid-sized businesses, helping to "level the corporate playing field" for these companies by providing the advice and guidance of senior financial executives without the financial burden of a full-time highly compensated employee.

In addition to their teamCFO work, both women give back to the community at large and serve as role models for the next generation of women entrepreneurs.

Besides serving as NAWBO-LA president, Yamanaka this month will be installed as a member of the NAWBO National Board of Directors. She also teaches financial literacy for business owners at NAWBO-LA's PEAK Leadership Academy<sup>SM</sup> and conducts seminars for high school students on basic financial skills. In addition, she and Tsang-Hidding work closely with a handful of nonprofit organizations that serve mental health, veteran's and children's causes.

For more information on NAWBO-LA's leadership, visit [www.nawbola.org](http://www.nawbola.org).

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### NAWBO-LA Membership Rises to New Heights

*Chapter wins NAWBO National Membership Drive Award, as more women business owners become part of, benefit from and contribute to the NAWBO-LA community*

NAWBO-LA continues to showcase the power of strength in numbers, with its success demonstrated by winning the “Large Chapter Category” in this year’s NAWBO National Membership Drive. For the month of March, NAWBO-LA increased membership by 14.6%, more than any other chapter in National’s largest category – those with more than 150 members.

This year’s National membership campaign focused on “Influence: Rising,” recognizing the triumphs of women entrepreneurs in the past and the great possibilities for the future. NAWBO-LA Vice President of Membership Madelyn Alfano, president of Maria’s Italian Kitchen, credits the passion of the NAWBO-LA Board of Directors and the outstanding staff – including Membership Manager Joyce Lee – for attracting new members and giving them opportunities to learn and grow.

“We’re not stale, and there’s no status quo,” Alfano said. “We’re always looking for new ways to do things. We have so much to offer.”



members at various NAWBO-LA events (click image to enlarge)

### NAWBO-LA on the Move

One way members can develop valuable business connections, expand their circles of success and build lifelong relationships is by attending NAWBO-LA on the Move – monthly networking breakfast meetings held in small settings conducive to connecting, learning and growing.

Member Cory Chew, owner of Bast Insurance Services, says the meetings help her learn what challenges other businesses are facing and discuss various approaches to resolving them.

“We troubleshoot, we offer suggestions, and always, in there somewhere, is a solution that I can put to use,” Chew noted. “I recommend that others attend because you never can predict what will be the best thing for your business. When I first started attending the meetings, I thought that I would, at best, find a couple of clients for my business. I had no idea how many other ways the meetings would benefit me.”

One NAWBO-LA on the Move benefit involves the referral program. Members can bring a prospective member to up to two meetings as an introduction. For every referral who joins, the member receives \$25 off her next membership renewal.



members at various NAWBO-LA events (click image to enlarge)

### My NAWBO-LA

Chew also noted she appreciates that NAWBO-LA offers a wide range of events and programs, so members can choose what works best for them. That’s the foundation of “My NAWBO-LA,” which allows women to own their membership experience and create their own value – while also owning a future that includes responsibility as stewards above and beyond themselves.

New members – whether they’ve owned their businesses for months or years – point out the various ways they already are benefiting from NAWBO-LA, plus hope to benefit and contribute in the future.

Judy Gatena, president of Abacus One Computer Supplies, Inc., has run her business successfully for 17 years, but feels she can learn from others who have traveled down the business path before her. She already has joined the current PEAK Leadership

Academy<sup>SM</sup> capacity-building program as part of her NAWBO-LA experience.

"I'm excited about meeting more like-minded women entrepreneurs and connecting on a personal and professional level. All of the women I've met have that energy about them. They're so happy to talk to you and give you information," she said, adding, "I'm looking forward to giving back too, and maybe helping women who have newer businesses that I can guide."

For Loren Bennitt, who started her business YogiMind last year, it's important to make business connections through NAWBO-LA, but to give back also.

"It's been a great opportunity to get out and talk with people and develop my 30-second 'elevator speech,'" she said. "Initially you come to promote your own business, and then you start meeting other people and find out ways you can be of support."

Another new member, LaTonya Pegues, owner of BOAZ Enterprises, appreciates NAWBO-LA's commitment to continuing cultivating its members. Besides looking to establish business partnerships, her exposure to the organization has made her more interested in public policy advocacy.

"I'm looking forward to the NAWBO-LA connection," she said. "I've heard so many great things, and I'm looking forward to experiencing great things myself."

NAWBO-LA Immediate Past President Bonnie Nijst, president and CEO of Zeesman Communications, Inc., says this type of active participation in the chapter does more than help members on an individual level: "Everyone benefits when we're champions for each others' successes."

To learn more about what NAWBO-LA can offer, visit [www.nawbola.org](http://www.nawbola.org).

#### **NAWBO-LA: Maximizing Your Membership**

Part of the NAWBO-LA membership experience includes access to a wide range of programs, services and other benefits. For long-time and new members alike, here's a reminder of NAWBO-LA's offerings:

##### *Annual Signature Events:*

- Board Installation Reception
- Membership Drive & Diversity Expo
- Legacy Society Holiday Mixer and Silent Auction
- NAWBO National Public Policy Days
- Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon
- NAWBO National Conference

##### *Programs and Initiatives:*

- NAWBO-LA PEAK Leadership Academy (a premier capacity-building program designed especially for peak-performing women)
- Civic and Public Policy Engagements
- Enterprise Institute Scholarship Opportunities
- Legacy Society Fundraising

##### *Meetings and Mixers:*

- NAWBO-LA on the Move
- Speaker Series: Featuring Women of Influence
- Public Policy Forums
- Networking Mixers

##### *Other Opportunities/Benefits:*

- Connections with NAWBO-LA Corporate Partners
- Los Angeles County Business Federation Membership
- Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Associate Membership
- Free Subscription to the *Los Angeles Business Journal*
- Public Policy Action Alerts and Surveys
- Online Newsletter and Member e-Bulletins
- Online Member Directory

For details, visit [www.nawbola.org](http://www.nawbola.org).

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*Jane Skeeter and Daphne Anneet make the voice of women business owners heard as part of Access Washington, D.C., and encourage members to attend the upcoming Access Sacramento*

NAWBO-LA leaders brought the voice of women business owners to the nation's capital in April when they attended Access Washington, D.C., which this year focused on the message of "Building America Together."

President-Elect Jane Skeeter and Secretary Daphne Anneet joined more than 200 business and civic leaders for the annual advocacy trip organized by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and the Office of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The delegation included several other elected officials from the region, plus representatives from more than 20 Southern California business advocacy and trade organizations.

The event "continued to expand our spheres of influence and further heighten NAWBO-LA's visibility in the public policy arena," said Skeeter, who participated on the Small Business Committee. Her team met with lawmakers' aides to address a number of critical issues, including extension of a research and development tax credit to help Los Angeles manufacturers compete globally.

Added Anneet, "The trip was a great opportunity for NAWBO-LA to enhance its presence in the Los Angeles business community as one of the voices to which Washington needs to listen. It also gave us a chance to strategize on how we can work with other local agencies to address issues important to our membership."



*Los Angeles business and civic leaders, including members of NAWBO-LA's leadership team, take part in the 2008 Access Washington, D.C. advocacy trip. (Photo courtesy of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. [Click on image to enlarge](#))*

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce found great value in NAWBO-LA's participation.

"NAWBO-LA played an important role in communicating our region's challenges and opportunities during our Access Washington, D.C. advocacy trip, particularly surrounding those issues important to small and women-owned businesses," said Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Gary Toebben. "Partnering with organizations like NAWBO-LA strengthens the power of our voice when we meet with legislators, and helps us advance our shared policy agenda for the region."

Besides participating on policy teams, attendees had the opportunity to hear remarks from a wide range of high-level speakers, including Mayor Villaraigosa, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Congresswoman and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and Ambassador Susan Schwab, U.S. Trade Representative. Participants also made the most of the networking events, with Skeeter and Anneet establishing valuable connections with local businesses and agencies that potentially can lead to future partnerships and additional NAWBO-LA member benefits.

Both Skeeter and Anneet encourage NAWBO-LA members to carry the public policy mantle forward by advocating for issues important to them and other women business owners at the upcoming Access Sacramento (*see additional story*). In the meantime, they look forward to Access Washington, D.C. in 2009.

"It was a valuable learning experience and it was great to be there this year," Skeeter said. "We hope that NAWBO-LA has an even larger visibility and voice next year."

#### **Get Access to State Government Via Sacramento Advocacy Trip**

Join business owners, leaders and elected officials from throughout Southern California to advocate on important issues during the annual Access Sacramento trip, taking place this year June 16-17.

Led by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Access Sacramento includes a delegation of more than 100 to meet with state lawmakers, members of the governor's office and other decision-makers on issues including transportation, education, infrastructure, general business, health care, energy and the environment. The trip also includes a special luncheon with lawmakers and high-ranking state officials.

Access Sacramento represents an opportunity for NAWBO-LA members to impact public policy on issues that matter most – particularly critical this year at a time when the budget cycle is about to start and fiscal policy is at the forefront.

Space is limited, so book your spot as soon as possible. To register, visit [www.lachamber.com](http://www.lachamber.com) and click on "Advocacy," and then on "Advocacy Trips."

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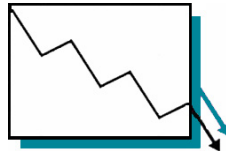
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### Experts Offer Strategies to Manage and Thrive in the Current Economy

*Despite the downturn, small and mid-sized businesses can find opportunities for growth and lay the groundwork for a more prosperous future*



The news every day points out the challenges caused by the current economic climate, but that doesn't necessarily mean doom and gloom for small and mid-sized firms. Experts say that by making smart, non-reactionary decisions, these businesses not only can hold their own – they also can build for a stronger future.

In an article written for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) website, SBA Portland District Office Director Harry DeWolf notes:

"Do not bury your head in the ground waiting for things to get better. Look how your business can leverage this time to actually increase your opportunities to outsmart larger competitors who, during a downturn, carry on with business as usual or are unable to adapt quickly. Proactive small business entrepreneurs can actually thrive:

- Maintain a strong cash stream throughout the downturn, in contrast to other companies that may have liquidity problems.
- Become a leaner, more cost-effective and more efficient operation, better positioned to do well when the market improves.
- Gain market share by taking it away from competitors unable to adjust to shifting market conditions.

"The challenge is to be aggressive and imaginative," DeWolf also writes. "Entrepreneurs who survive and prosper during hard times look beyond the present day to overcome the constraints of tradition. They see the firm from a new perspective, and do business differently. A status quo attitude will assure a steady decline and possible failure."

Local economists concur, pointing out the importance of businesses being adaptable, looking for opportunities in growth sectors, connecting with consumers more than ever, and maintaining good relationships with their banks.

"Remain flexible, nimble and cost-sensitive," noted Chris Thornberg, the Los Angeles-based principal of Beacon Economics. He still sees a rough economy ahead, but notes that as with all downturns, this one too will end. "Play your cards right and in a year you will be in a better position than your competitors."

### Opportunities and Relationships

Jack Kyser, senior vice president and chief economist of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, says that even in today's economy, certain sectors offer great potential – one being exports.

"The dollar is down, and there is always interest in something from Los Angeles that carries the LA mark," he said. "There's a huge window of opportunity in exports."



Another opportunity, according to Kyser, lies in tourism and hospitality, with the weak dollar again the impetus, this time for bringing international travelers to Southern California. (See *end of story for business resources on exports, tourism and more*).

Even for businesses that can't tap into the export or tourism markets, there are important key points to keep in mind – namely the vital relationships with customers and banks. Kyser noted, "Usually a small percentage of your customers represent the bulk of your business. You have to figure out if you are connecting with your customers and if you can better meet their needs with a perceived value add-on. Look at differentiation factors, and keep in frequent touch with your better customers."

### Long-Term Strategic Assistance

As for banks, it's important in challenging times for businesses to make sure their lenders understand their financial position to help them make the best possible decisions.

"Having a strong relationship with your banker to bring valuable insight to the discussion regarding how to avoid repeating past difficulties, as well as leverage future opportunities, can help you plan in uncertain times," said Lisa Mazzola, vice president of business banking in the metro Los Angeles area for Wachovia Corporation, one of NAWBO-LA's corporate partners.

She added, "Business owners should view their banking relationship as one of their most significant business partnerships, and develop an association with a bank and a banker that

have the resources to deliver thoughtful, strategic assistance over the long haul.”

So what’s the bottom line? It’s that small and mid-sized businesses can take actions to succeed, even when the economic going gets tough. As SBA’s DeWolf concludes in his article, “Resourceful entrepreneurs take advantage and capture the opportunities, they take advantage of the extra time to develop action plans and take steps during today’s hard times to lay the groundwork for tomorrow’s prosperity.”

#### **Resources for Business Success**

Here are some resources to help you manage your business during both the good times and the tough times:

- Export assistance from the World Trade Center Association Los Angeles-Long Beach: [www.wtca-lalb.org](http://www.wtca-lalb.org)
- Connections for meeting and travel professionals from LA INC. The Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau: [www.discoverlosangeles.com](http://www.discoverlosangeles.com)
- Local business assistance from the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation: [www.laedc.org](http://www.laedc.org)
- Overall assistance for small businesses from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA): [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)
- Free business counseling from successful business owners through SCORE, a resource partner with the SBA: [www.scorela.org](http://www.scorela.org)
- Resources and business connections through NAWBO-LA: [www.nawbola.org](http://www.nawbola.org)

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