



Ladies lead the way at Expo event



Something special was happening at the Women's Business Forum and Expo event in April, making it the flagship event of the year to celebrate women in business across the region.

The Chamber took over The Guildhall in Worcester, where attendees were invited to spend the whole day at the special 'Expo' to network and mingle with fellow women professionals, and to explore the exhibition area before watching models strut their stuff on the catwalk.

Exhibitors including Whitefoot Forward, Kendall Wadley and Nexus Creative took over half the main room, whilst the other half was 'dedicated to followers of fashion!'

Clothing was supplied and displayed by Stripes, Roman Originals and 2nd Skin Lingerie, with hair design and demonstration given by national favourites Toni & Guy and Umberto Gianni.

This was networking with a work-life balance focus, celebrating successful women in

business whilst enjoying a bit of pampering and fashion along the way.

Louise Hewett, of Worcestershire's Hewett Recruitment, opened the day with anecdotes of her life as a successful businesswoman and mother, in charge of the successful Hewett Recruitment in Worcester and Kidderminster.

Graham Eden of Cognitor, Alison Woodcock of Natwest Bank and Sandler Sales Institute also gave presentations throughout the day, that were well-attended and well received.

Coordinating the Women's Business Expo

"The women's fashion expo was great for networking. Being at an exhibition all day gives you a good opportunity to get round to several different businesses and have a good chat. We made several contacts with companies that either provided services we wanted or may want in the future or that were interested in our health talks or diaries."

was the Chamber's Naomi Rusher. "It was a fantastic day, that proved very popular.

"It's about bringing businesswomen together from across the region, in to a forum where they can network, sharing their own experiences, and hopefully taking away valuable leads and information to grow and develop their business.

"Added to that, we wanted to provide a bit of extra flair and fun to give some real talking points! We know that women in business are incredibly successful, and enjoy some of the finer things in life along with it."

Helping women to help themselves

Malvern-based Susan Russell Publishing have won praise from both Waterstone's and Amazon for the design of a range of innovative health monitoring diaries.

"With more than 10,000 books published every month it is a major coup to get books accepted by buyers from large retail chains like Waterstone's," said Susan Kelsey, who conceived the health diary concept and co-designed the diaries with her GP husband Russell.

This success has capped a somewhat frenetic first six months of trading for the small independent publishers. They took a gamble in deciding to publish the health monitoring diaries themselves, rather than accepting offers from mainstream publishers, but it looks to be a gamble that will pay off.

The concept of health monitoring by use of daily symptom charts is not new in medicine. Evidence supports the use of daily symptom monitoring but never before have all the elements of a diet, exercise and lifestyle diary, a journal and a detachable symptom chart all been combined into one easy-to-use format.

The diary concept extends across a range of different medical conditions, and all have endorsement from a number of specialists.

The first diaries published concern women's health problems, from puberty right up to the menopause.

Menstrual disorders are extremely common, with over 4 million women in the UK alone suffering with hot flushes and night sweats due to the menopause. The hot flush diary is specifically designed to help women understand and control menopausal symptoms. The blue moons diary is aimed at women with conditions such as premenstrual syndrome, polycystic ovary syndrome and endometriosis. These conditions affect 10-20% of all women in the UK.

Susan and Russell are running a national campaign to raise awareness about women's health issues and the benefits of health monitoring. They give women's health talks to companies which are proving very popular, and are currently giving a series of talks to staff at Worcestershire County Council.

Susan and Russell have been contacted by one of the UK's leading book distribution companies who asked if they would be able to represent them.

"The managing director of the distribution company phoned us up and said that Waterstone's head buyer had suggested he contact us.

"We started out very small with just online sales and very little marketing, but things are taking off due to word of mouth which is very gratifying," said Susan.

www.susan-russell.com



Storage and shipping service grows and grows

Hartlebury-based business storage and records management specialists Whitefoot-Forward have expanded their pallet storage and logistics service.

Having gained new customers in the garden product and electrical goods sectors the firm has ploughed £75,000 into additional racking, fork-lift trucks, delivery vehicles and staff – creating a larger, fully dedicated pallet storage and distribution operation at its 60,000 sq ft Grainstore location near Shenstone.

Whitefoot-Forward now receives and processes at least one container of consumer goods a day at the site, and ships out over 100 pallets a week nationwide to retailers such as Tesco, Debenhams, John Lewis and Aldi, as well as TV shopping channel QVC.

The expansion in pallet storage customers has also enabled Whitefoot-Forward to dedicate its second warehouse facility, a 60,000 sq ft location on the Hartlebury Trading Estate, entirely to the specialised, bar-coded storage and management of archived business records. The secure site has benefited from additional racking, and 16,000 new archive boxes have been received from customers across the region so far this year.

Michael Whitefoot, managing director of Whitefoot-Forward said: "We aim to offer a well managed, responsive and affordable range of storage services and this is appealing to an increasing number of companies in both the private and public sectors. With each of our sites now dedicated to particular specialisms we are well equipped to enhance our service record still further, as well as taking on more clients."

Whitefoot-Forward was established in 2001 and is a past Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire & Worcestershire award-winner. Another branch of the company – Whitefoot-Forward PR, run by Michelle Whitefoot – provides a growing public relations consultancy service specialising in the garden and automotive sectors.

www.whitefoot-forward.com



Worcestershire NHS
Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Turn to page 22 for news of three Chamber events partnered with the Worcestershire NHS Trust



Planting wildflowers was just one of the activities pupils from Wigmore High School experienced during their Biodiversity day at Kingspan Insulation

Supporting biodiversity is an important part of maintaining an ecological balance, but not one that is "front of mind" to most businesses. Kingspan Insulation prides itself in being different in this regard.

In 2006, Kingspan Insulation commissioned a report from local Kington-based experts,

The Biodiversity Challenge



Border Ecology, on the biodiversity of Kingspan's Herefordshire site at Pembridge. The results were surprising, pleasantly so, in that the survey showed that what was assumed to be a fairly barren site, was actually a thriving habitat for a large number of species of plants, birds and bats. As a result, Border Ecology made a number of recommendations for how this biodiversity could be protected and enlarged.

Following the recommendations, Kingspan sponsored a student from Worcester University's MA in Sustainable Development Advocacy to explore what steps might be possible, and create a detailed action plan.

The first phase of the plan was put into action in a joint venture with local schools, through which children from Wigmore High School, Lady Hawkins' School and Shobdon & Kingsland Primary Schools were involved in creating bee and slow worm shelters and

planting wildflowers, climbers and shrubs, providing the food and natural habitats that are an essential element of any ecological system.

The children also put up boxes to provide new homes for birds, bats and insects, learning, in the process, about the variety of creatures and plants that inhabit their natural environment.

The schools have been unanimously positive about this business-education link and the benefits that it brings in terms of the educational and social development of the children. The children had a ball as well!

This project is the latest phase in Kingspan's ongoing commitment to the environment, which has already seen sums of money being provided through the Kingspan Insulation Community Trust for environmental and biodiversity projects in the wider community.

www.insulation.kingspan.com

An Apprentice has an enterprising day at the University of Worcester



left to right: Ida Gunnerlind (student, Worcester Idea Network), Laurie Bilby (representing BLWM), Kate Rigby (Kate Rigby Associates), Sophie Kain, Daniel Hollands (student, Worcester Ideas Network), Kat Jones (Enterprise Manager, University of Worcester)

BBC's 'Apprentice' series 3 candidate, Sophie Kain, was the keynote speaker at the University of Worcester's Enterprise Festival back in May, where she spoke on 'Inspiration for Innovation' to students and staff.

Delegates at the event were able to ask Sophie questions on anything from what she thought about on her journey to Worcester, to what Sir Alan Sugar is really like.

Sophie offered an insight into how small ideas can become big business, and how to be inspired by the simplest of thoughts such as "why can't you have an information portal on trains for transport connections?"

Business service providers, including the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire, were on hand at the event to provide advice to keen students looking to develop their enterprise and employability skills.

The delegates were also treated to amusing and informative interactive presentations designed to showcase student talent in the field of enterprise and develop employability skills. University of Worcester graduate Gemma Perkins showcased her design

company 'Gemstar Productions' which has had immense success. Gemma started this business through the programme Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education 'SPEED' in her last year of study in 2007. The student society Worcester Ideas Network 'WIN' showed their successes from the previous year and gave a taster of things to come for the society in the next academic year.

Other highly informative and entertaining presentations were given by 'Make Your Mark', Kate Rigby Associates, and Balancing Business.

Kat Jones, Enterprise Manager at the University, was delighted with the response from delegates, "It is never a challenge to make enterprise and employability skills interesting and exciting when you have such excellent results to work with such as Gemma and WIN. Sophie and all our presenters were truly inspiring and engaging."

For further details on enterprise related events at the University of Worcester please contact Kat Jones, email k.jones@worc.ac.uk

www.worc.ac.uk

Following the rules for redundancy

As redundancies reach a 7 year high a leading employment lawyer warns employers to follow the rules when it comes to making staff redundant

The Chartered Management Institute has recently published the concerning news that the UK is experiencing a 7 year high in redundancies with 3% of UK managers becoming redundant. This is the highest rate of UK redundancies since 2001 when the figure topped 3.7%. In response to this and due to the bleak economic outlook, Richard Green, Partner and Head of the Employment Department at leading Worcester and Birmingham-based law firm Harrison Clark LLP, urges employers to be extra vigilant in their approach to the redundancy process. Failure to follow correct procedures when dealing with redundancies could make a dismissal automatically unfair and lead to an influx of successful unfair dismissal claims.

As the economy continues to bite at the finances of companies both small and large this situation needs to be avoided and



Richard Green advises employers to take thorough legal advice prior to commencing a redundancy process.

Mr Green states, "Such advice would cover the need for objective fair selection criteria, a proper consultation process prior to any decisions being made and the consideration of available alternative positions within the organisation concerned. Provided the process is properly handled in accordance with such legal requirements, the impact of a difficult time for all concerned can be minimised and the event of costly tribunals avoided."

www.harrison-clark.co.uk