

Executive Women International draws more members networking for business

by **Matrissa Leggett**

Representatives of Executive Women International's member companies are becoming more diverse in their job titles and responsibilities and are doing more networking.

"When I joined the organization in 1984, most of the members were secretaries to executives," President Jane Allamong said. "Now the positions have changed. We have executive assistants, entrepreneurs, women in sales and marketing and directors of finance."

Executive Women International (EWI), headquartered in Salt Lake City, is designed to promote member firms, assist with personal and professional development and encourage community involvement, Allamong said. The Omaha Chapter, one of more than 75 across the U.S., Canada and Europe, has 46 member firms and 52 representatives.

Member companies range from large firms such as Jefferson Pilot and utilities such as OPPD to small entrepreneurial companies and home businesses. Each member company can choose up to three employees as representatives.

Allamong said companies must be posted for membership, so no member firms are direct business competitors.

"If we have member firms in the same

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work area than when I was working out of my home," he said. "Having employees, I have to deal with insurance and taxes and paperwork. Fortunately, my daughter handles most of that."

He said his children's interest in the field was one of the reasons he opened the studio in Suite S at 5930 S. 58th St.

"I'm in this because I like the artwork, and I was doing this sort of halfway out of my home," Scott said. "When I saw the desire in my kids, I decided to expand into a family business. I enjoy that my family wants to be a part of this."



Jane Allamong, president of Executive Women International ... More small business owners are using the organization for networking.

industry, we make sure they are different sizes or in different areas of town," she said.

Allamong, who also was Omaha's EWI president in 1991, said she has noticed that new members are focusing more on networking to gain business.

"Twenty years ago, members were more interested in personal and professional development," she said. "The scales have tipped more now to making business contacts."

"Because we have so many more startup companies as members, they want to get their names out there to grow their businesses."

Another change Allamong has noticed is that with a younger membership, representatives have less available time to spend on organization functions.

"The younger representatives have such restraints on their time with business, family and community," Allamong said. "We have had to restructure and better utilize our

meeting times to get their input. Instead of having board meetings and dinner meetings on different days, we now schedule them together."

She said the organization also uses e-mail and conference calls for more efficient communication.

Philanthropy is another of EWI's purposes. The chapter awards \$3,000 worth of scholarships through the organization's Adult Students in Scholastic Transition (ASIST) program and promotes literacy for elementary students through the Reading Rally initiative.

"Omaha chose to be part of the ASIST program because there are not as many scholarships out there for adults," Allamong said. "We try to help them all four years."

"One of our scholarship recipients is a woman whose adult child has multiple sclerosis. She has had a lot on her plate, but she

will graduate from nursing school in May."

The Reading Rally takes place each October in conjunction with agencies such as Camp Fire and Girls Inc. and involves group reading and activities for about 20 girls each year, Allamong said. The books are donated to the girls.

Allamong, who is director of finance for Girls Inc. of Omaha, became involved with EWI when she was chosen to be her firm's representative.

She has worked for Girls Inc. since 1982 when her husband's position with Union Pacific Railroad brought the couple to Omaha from Philadelphia.

"I had worked in finance and had always had an interest in social work," Allamong said. "It worked out with this job that I got to do both."

Girls Inc. is a national nonprofit organization providing after school and summer educational and recreational resources for girls 6 to 18 years old.

"I like being able to make sure all the finances are properly done so the girls get the programs and opportunities they need to help them succeed," Allamong said.

She said she has gained personal and professional development through EWI.

"I have done lots of professional networking between the Girls Inc. board and the EWI members when we need support or services," she said. "Having served on the EWI board and having done public speaking for the group has helped me come out of my shell a little bit."

She said when Omaha hosts the 2006 Executive Women International spring conference, it will involve 100 to 150 representatives from the U.S. and Canada. It will have some workshops that will be open to all Omaha businesswomen.

"It's a big undertaking for the Omaha Chapter," Allamong said.

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