

Providence BUSINESS NEWS

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Women hear call for equality

By **Erin M. Piorek**
Staff Writer

When Sue Herrera began her journalism career at CNBC eight years ago, she was hopeful, but not confident, that she was entering a profession in which men and women were treated equally.

What she found was not a level playing field. Her expectations were fulfilled, her hopes diminished.

Today, she says, women no longer just go into the workplace

with hopes of equality, but with real expectations of equality. And while women may not have achieved the level playing field that Herrera had hoped for, they are beginning to be treated with more equality than a decade ago. At least that's Herrera's experience.

She shared those experiences with scores of business and professional women at a conference last week at Bryant College.

More than 400 women from around the region made their way to



BRIAN McDONALD

CHALLENGING WOMEN to pursue equality in the workplace; Sue Herrera of CNBC

the Smithfield campus last week for a new event – The 1997
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BRIAN McDONALD

Among the women at the Summit were Jude Carter, left and Susan Reid.

Women at the Summit

► Summit

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Women's Summit.

"We thought it was important to generate some interest in business for women," said Kati Machtley, co-chair of the Women's Summit Planning Committee, "and we thought many more students would like to hear more about what's available to women in the business arena."

The summit, which was jointly sponsored by Bryant College and Sen. John Chafee R-R.I., was a way to bring working women together to talk about challenges they expect to face in the next millennium. Workshops were held on topics ranging from mentoring and sharpening negotiating skills to balancing demands of work and family.

Besides community leaders, business representatives and policy makers from around the region, students, faculty and staff of Bryant were also present at the summit — many stopping at the event between classes, to listen to speakers discussing issues and challenges facing businesswomen.

Featured speakers included Hazel Henderson, futurist and author of six books, including *Building a Win-Win World*; Joanna Lau, president and co-founder of LAU Technologies, a manufacturer of electronic systems for U.S. military and commercial applications; and Herera, anchor of CNBC's *Business Tonight* and author of *Women on the Street: Making it on Wall Street — the World's Toughest Business*.

Herera, who covers daily news stories and the stock market, has been with CNBC since its inception eight years ago.

Traditionally something "the husband takes care of," having a knowledge of the stock market may give a woman credibility, Herera said, but women must demand credibility for whatever they do.

"Women are a great source for economic growth," because they are flexible, resourceful, and able to communicate well with others, she said. Companies, she said, are beginning to realize that by becoming more accommodating to their female employees.

Generally more concerned with getting the job done well, women are likely to "focus more on the work and less on the publicity," Herera said. And unlike a man, a woman is also more likely to take a job that she thinks would make her happy, even if it means a pay cut.

"We (women) need to change the agenda," she said. "Women need to re-learn the way we think about money and power."

The two major issues facing working women today are discrepancy in pay between men and women, and balancing a family and a career, both of which have improved over the years, Herera said.

"When I began my career with CNBC, I hoped for a level playing field, but I didn't expect one," she said. "Women today have come to expect a level playing field."

In the next few months, Senator Chafee said he plans to work on federal legislation designed to improve the quality of child care, making it more affordable for low- and middle-income families.

Chafee also said he hopes the Senate will reconsider legislation — The Family Friendly Workplace Act — that would provide hourly employees the option of a two week/80-hour flexible schedule rather than the strict 40-hour work week that is currently required by law. □

ON THE RECORD

“ Developing the leadership potential of neighborhood residents is a crucial component of Providence's economic development. **”**

—William R. Walter, executive director of the Smith Hill Center, commenting on the Pew Civic Enterprise Initiative which seeks civic entrepreneurs.

“ We need to change the agenda. Women need to relearn the way we think about money and power. **”**

—Sue Herera, CNBC business news anchor, speaking to women at the Women's Summit at Bryant College for women in business.

“ We never know when we're going to disagree. And the issues are too large to abdicate in any way. You're always working for the common good. **”**

—Kate Racine, member of the Public Utilities Commission, commenting on the problems, potential and otherwise, arising from lack of a third member on the commission.