

Get Connected

NAWBO Orlando extends helping hand to women business owners

BY BILL OGDEN

Fernola Rogan wished she knew about the National Association of Women Business Owners when she launched her company five years ago.

Rogan, 55, CEO of Rogan Marketing & Communications, said she could have turned to members of the organization to help her connect with an accountant, attorney and to get help with setting up the structure of her business.

"It's about mentorship and taking a business to the next level," said Rogan, the new president of the Orlando chapter of the group.

The group maintains an office in the National Entrepreneur Center, located in Orlando Fashion Square mall, but the office is open only to handle scheduled appointments.

Since taking over as president last year, Rogan launched a member-to-member program so that the group's 60 members could refer vendors and work to see another.

The organization also is hosting its second business plan competition. Called Driving Your Business, winners in the competition receive \$7,000 in cash, a year of a advice from a panel of marketers, accountants and attorneys; a \$5,000 market analysis by the University of Central Florida Venture Lab; and two Southwest Airlines tickets.

Those who want to compete must notify the organization by May 27 and file an application by July 18. A panel of judges will choose six finalists, who will be interviewed in September, when two finalists — one emerging and one established company — will be chosen at a luncheon where the finalists are present. *Jewell Park Holdings Lifestyle Center LLC* and *RunRag Inc.*, an environmental compliance company, were the two 2012 winners.

Here's what Rogan had to say about the organization:

Mission: To promote entrepreneurship of women through education, training, mentoring and coaching activities, by providing a platform for women to learn about operating a business.

Why I got involved: To help further an organization that could help other women entrepreneurs.

Local members: 65, but we are growing by five each month.

How to join: Visit www.nawboorlando.org or attend an event.

Benefits of joining: NAWBO can help your business grow through seminars and mentoring from members.

Age range of the members: 20-65

Cost to join: \$175-645, based on level of business.

What to expect at an event: The first half-hour is networking, followed by interactive presentations on business issues, like health care, financial training and credit.

How NAWBO furthered my business: It introduced me to resources I didn't know were available and connections I can use for vendors.

What I enjoy most about NAWBO: Camaraderie and friendships with people who are trying to grow businesses.

National Association of Women Business Owners Orlando

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