

11/10/09 - EDITOR'S BLOG

Art in science: One woman's million dollar mentality

Did you know that if all American women business owners united as a country, they would produce more gross national product than Canada, India and Vietnam combined? You would know this — and, in fact, would have heard it more than once — if you had attended the 5th Annual Million Dollar Women Symposium at the Hawthorne Hotel in Salem last week.

That's where Salem State College's Small Business Development Center and the Creative Economy Association of the North Shore brought about 150 women to network, listen to a panel of women whose businesses gross more than a million a year and gather wisdom from Wendi Goldsmith, founder and president of the Bioengineering Group and federal appointee to the National Women's Business Council.

I've known Goldsmith for several years, aware that she is working on THE largest government contract ever awarded to a private business, as her environmental engineering firm works alongside the government to shore up the Mississippi River Delta and save New Orleans, or, as she says, build the Great Wall of Louisiana.

But to hear Goldsmith tell the story, of starting her own business at age 26, see it nearly fold post 9-11 and then bounce back to 75 employees in five offices, is nothing short of inspirational.

She is working on the largest public infrastructure project in the history of this country with a \$150 million contract and yet, when she graduated from Yale in 1988, she would have needed a man's signature on a Small Business Administration backed loan — a signature from her father, husband or son.

One of her first undertakings was to stabilize the eroding shoreline at Walden Pond, which had just been "loved to death." This led to heading up the Department of Defense's first LEED (green building) certified project.

The lovely, red-headed mother of two started out as a geologist and liked to stand in rivers and get her hands dirty. Her success is partly due to paying attention to the Dutch and to Germany and to practical, forward-thinking environmental beliefs that soon caught on here to become mainstream green practices.

But it's also due to old fashioned creativity and to not listening to naysayers. Art Throb would like to thank Wendi Goldsmith for thinking outside the landfill and for moving forward each day, applying art to science.



By Dinah Cardin

Dinah Cardin spent her childhood pounding away at her typewriter in the Ozarks and yelling at her parents when they interrupted. This, combined with years of trying to please East Coast editors, has built character, readying her to launch her own publication. Dinah was the arts writer for the Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror and North Shore Sunday and staff writer for the Merrimack River Current. In 2005, she helped launch the Salem Gazette, acting as its first staff writer. Her writing has also appeared in Nantucket Magazine, North Shore Magazine, Yoga Journal, the New Orleans Weekly Gambit and the Salem News. She has taught news writing and media courses at Salem State College. Following six months of travel and working on a book to reconcile with the Bible Belt of her upbringing, in 2007, she launched Fireheart Communications, LLC and worked with clients as diverse as artists, musicians, politicians, downtown Salem businesses, environmental groups and North Shore and national non profits. She is happy to be on this journey to launch Art Throb and to write about art in everyday life.