Business Women's Network

By Georgette Frazer

Marshfield's possibly most unorganized organization came into being in May, 1992, when 60 professional women met to hear a presentation by Mary Strickland, Women's Business Coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Development. During that session, a survey was conducted to determine whether there was an interest in future meetings of area business and professional women. "No more organizations!", "No more required meetings and dues!", "No more officer responsibilities!", came the survey responses, with an equally strong agreement that, "We'd love to have a chance to get together on an informal basis." So, the Business Women's Network was born.

A steering committee was charged with organizing this non-organization. The committee members were Shari Daniels, Natalie Erpenback, Georgette Frazer, Eileen Kelz, Tammy Kirsch, Jan Thomas, Darlene Wagner and Kay Wilson. They met through the summer of 1992 to design a way to meet the survey's requirements and launch the ongoing group in September of that year.

The Business Women's Network meetings were held quarterly, at lunchtime on a Wednesday or Thursday. Each quarter someone volunteered to host a program, which entailed sending out notices, arranging for the place and meal, and giving or sponsoring a program presentation at the meeting. The cost to the host for the mailing and door prize was about $100. Eileen Kelz kept the "Program Packet" which assisted each new host with programming ideas, and Joyce Billings and Georgette Frazer maintained the mailing list and printed out the mailing labels for each meeting. Members chose whether to attend any particular session, paying only for their meal. No dues, no treasury, and no officers existed. Meeting topics have included: "Tax Issues for Businesses" (Natalie Erpenbach), "Making the Most of Your Wardrobe" (Eileen Kelz), "Desktop Publishing Aids for Marketing Your Business" (Judy Haslow), "New Options for Elder Care" (Friendship Manor Staff), "Financial Planning Issues for Business and Professional Women" (Georgette Frazer and Jan Thomas), "Skin Care Make-overs" (Tammy Kirsch), and "Getting started with your Real Estate Purchase" (Heather Holden). Each meeting also began with those in attendance giving "30-second commercials" about their enterprises and ended with a door-prize giveaway.

Women in business fields could be quite isolated, excluded from the "Old Boys' Network." This organization from the 1990's provided friendship and collaboration and sharing of knowledge among businesswomen in Marshfield, strengthening each one. It is hard for people who were born after that time to fathom a time when women in the workplace were rare.