

ABWA honors local business women

At its annual Women of Distinction program, the members of the Women of Tomorrow Chapter of the American Businesswomen's Association recognized four local women for their leadership in the Okeechobee business community. Meeting for lunch at the Clock Family Restaurant on Sept. 24, ABWA members were joined by current honorees and their guests as well as former honorees, many who return each year to share in this event.

Recognitions are given in three categories: Business Leadership, Educational Leadership, and Community Service. The 2009 honorees are Sharon Ming of Edward Jones Investments in Business Leadership; Kelly Owens, Okeechobee School Board Chairperson in Education; and both Raye Deusinger, Volunteer Community Ambassador for Florida's Blood Centers, and Teresa Chandler, Assistant Vice-President Regional Sales and Marketing Manager with Seacoast National Bank, for Community Service.

Each woman was asked to share those qualities that have led to her success. Sharon Ming, a fourth generation Okeechobean, credited her parents for teaching her a solid work ethic, which she is imparting to her daughter Alexandria. Alex has had to raise all of the money needed to compete in the Miss Florida pageant. Sharon feels that a good work ethic comes from taking responsibility for all aspects of life—personal and professional. She credits her success in business to having a team of well-organized people behind her so that she can focus on her job. Two other key factors are "practicing what you preach" and "leading by example." Lastly, she admitted that loving the work you do is essential. You must enjoy going to the workplace everyday.

Kelly Owens, an admitted transplant, has come to consider Okeechobee her true home. She believes that her success comes from doing work that allows her to give back to this community. Success arises from taking risks. She related the example of becoming a middle-school math teacher after initially stating unequivocally that she did not want to teach either that age group or subject. She came later to find it was a rewarding experience. She believes strongly in life-long learning and takes every chance to expand her knowledge. Passion for her work keeps her focused. Finally, she stressed the importance of building teamwork through good interpersonal relations both at home and at work.

Raye Deusinger, the heart of the annual Blood Roundup, believes in trusting God to direct a person to the best place to do the best good. Her comments focused on staying positive and giving what you want to receive in behavior. She even gave us a brief, rousing chorus of "Accentuate the Positive." She thinks successful people surround themselves with successful people. Anyone who knows Raye sees a live embodiment of her philosophy that "a positive attitude is rewarded with a wide smile and good behavior."

Teresa Chandler's volunteer efforts are too numerous to list. As an employee of Seacoast National Bank and formerly Big Lake National, Teresa is grateful to the bank for helping her realize her desire to contribute to her community. She started her altruistic



Special to the Okeechobee News/ABWA Honored at the recent Business Women of Tomorrow - Women of Distinction luncheon on Sept. 24 are: (left to right) Raye Deusinger, Sharon Ming, Kelly Owens, and Teresa Chandler. Each of the women honored was presented with a plaque.

endeavors in 2004 at a bank function to raise money for Hurricane Katrina relief. The event raised \$20,000 for the American Red Cross. She says that the thrill of that success made her want more. Her fundraising activities in Okeechobee are legendary. She, too, believes in focusing on the positive. She even writes thank you letters to companies whose employees have given good service. She believes that good service should be rewarded. Most recently, Teresa has organized the teen dances that provide adolescents safe, well-

chaperoned places to enjoy themselves while helping to raise money for charitable causes. A group is now raising money for a hospital in Tampa that treats burn victims and many of the youngsters will be taking a field trip to tour the hospital to see how their fundraising helps others.

Congratulations to these four women who represent the fine caliber of business women in Okeechobee. Thanks to all the guests who shared this celebration of Women of Distinction.

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