

Ladies only

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Women striving to make \$1 million

Local entrepreneur was 1 of 10 Texans selected to try out

BY FANNY S. CHIRINOS
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On the registration form for the 2007 Texas Women's Conference was a small box that asked if the registrant was an entrepreneur and wanted to make \$1 million. Kathryn Childers checked the box.

Last week, the Corpus Christi public relations consultant stood before more than 7,000 women at the Austin conference, made her pitch for why she should receive help from Make Mine a Million \$ Business Program. She was one of 10 women business owners

from around the state chosen to vie for the chance to make their businesses million-dollar producers. The program was founded by non-profit Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence and Open from American Express.

"Who doesn't want to make a million dollars?" said Childers, owner of RedCab Productions.

She didn't win one of the five packages offered, but she took advantage of the networking opportunities.

Childers' company published the "Snow" books of the 2004 Christmas Eve snowfall in South Texas with more than 140,000 books in print.

The program, launched in 2005, provides women-owned businesses with mentors, loans, a line of credit, exposure through

marketing and communications technology to generate more than \$1 million in annual revenue. Only 3 percent of women-owned businesses reach \$1 million in annual revenue, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Texas' 676,000 women-owned businesses mirror that trend.

Last year, 40 women received Make Mine a Million \$ Business awards and this year 113 will be chosen. One of the reasons women are not reaching the mark is culture. Women couldn't get credit under their own names until 1973. Companies required that women co-sign under their fathers or husbands.

Childers, a former Secret Service agent, received her badge, gun and security pass in 1971, but recalls being more excited about receiving her



Childers
is a public relations consultant and former Secret Service agent.

own credit card.

The program helps women figure out the best ways to run their businesses and helps them and, in turn, the community succeed, said Nell Merlino, founder and president of Count Me In.

"That's money in everyone's pocket," Merlino said.

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