

In 2008, Nancy Richards, CEO and founder of First Preston Management, Inc. and Baylor University graduate, hosted a dinner in Hankamer's Blume Conference Center for 400 students, faculty and community members, all who had a strong desire to begin a business organization for women.

The dinner, coincidentally, served as the kickoff event for the newly chartered **Baylor Business Women** organization, which has grown tremendously since beginning in 2008.

Baylor Business Women (BBW) boasts a membership of 150 and is open to both women and men, undergraduate and graduate members who are looking for an opportunity to serve, an outlet for discussion, and the support system from students who have similar goals and needs.

"Baylor Business Women provides a forum for professionals to share their struggles and stories, creating a place to have dialogue, share common goals and build their own network," said faculty advisor Debra Burleson.

Advisors often attend monthly meetings and BBW events, but they take a backseat. BBW is a student-led and student-driven organization. From the organization's logo to electing board members, the students fulfill their own expectations. BBW's 10-member board and committees provide a calendar full of events that include social events, seminars and service events.

BBW also hosts a vast group of speakers who provide insight on the expectations of successful business professionals with topics such as balancing work and life at home. Recent speakers include Jacquelyn Cox,

"The inmates are learning how to interact with people again after so long," Koester said. "The night is to help them get comfortable, break down barriers and show them how to impress someone, like their wife who they haven't seen for years."

Working with PEP has helped the students break down their own barriers and see others in a new light.

"Since God forgives us for everything, we should forgive them," Koester said. "I've never met more polite men than the men I meet at Cleveland Prison. It's changed my whole outlook on life."

The group is not all work and no play. They also find time to take Zumba classes together, go bowling and have teas between mentors and mentees. BBW sees the importance in getting to know one another.

Part of what keeps BBW strong is the dynamic leadership. In order to even serve on the board,

candidates are nominated to sit on a board interview with the dean, a faculty advisor and the current president, said 2009-2010 BBW president Lane Irwin.

"There is an advantage to serving as an officer," Irwin said. "Taking on a leadership position helps you apply what you learn in class and gives you the opportunity to have actual conversations with business leaders."

"I saw Baylor Business Women as an opportunity to further develop my skills and knowledge of the business world," said 2008-2009 BBW president Danielle Rucker. "Baylor Business Women is not just a business organization; it is an organization with a profound love for God and for helping others grow in their faith and education. Becoming an officer for Baylor Business Women was an absolute must for me."

"There's a certain energy unique to the organization," Burleson said. And it is that energy that will lead the Baylor Business Women for years to come.

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president of the Baylor Women's Network of Houston, and Michael Franzese, former mob boss and now motivational speaker.

The group has even adopted a philanthropy, the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP). PEP is a nonprofit organization with a program developed to teach inmates the skills needed to run a legitimate business upon their release.

BBW travels to Cleveland Prison, about two hours from Houston, Texas, twice a year and hosts etiquette night.

"Baylor Business Women members teach etiquette in a social setting," said former BBW chaplain Rachel Koester.

But the night is more than placement settings.



Lane Irwin
2009-2010 BBW PRESIDENT
www.baylor.edu/business/women

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