



## Young Woman Business Owner of the Year **Leah Goldstein Moses** *The Improve Group*

Leah started The Improve Group in 2000 after seeing a need in the non-profit and public sectors for evaluation and strategic planning. Last year, revenues increased 126% from 2003.

Leah met the challenge of dramatic growth by creatively changing the business model.

As a business owner, she strives to promote the growth and success of other women. Currently, her five staff are all women. She offers paid advanced education for all staff; shared responsibility for business growth and development; and shared responsibility for knowledge transfer and professional development.

Leah's vast project management experience has been a great asset in leading her company. She is an excellent facilitator who produces timely, creative and innovative products for clients that directly address their needs and lead to improvements in program delivery. The Improve Group has conducted several large-scale research projects over the last five years with topics ranging from transportation to community involvement and outreach to personal and community safety. Clients include local, state and federal agencies and local and national non-profit organizations.



## Young Woman Business Owner of the Year **Stephanie Reese** *Newport Furnishings Minneapolis*

Steph founded Newport Furnishings of Minneapolis in 2002 with her husband Greg. In an industry that typically takes years to show a profit, Newport Furnishings was profitable the

first year and showed a 36% increase in revenue from 2003-2004. Currently operating with one part-time employee, they moved in 2004 to a larger facility to allow for expansion and plan to add a full-time employee in 2005.

Steph's talents combined with excellent customer service have driven Newport's customer buy ratio higher than the industry average. The addition of 12 other Newport Furnishings outlets throughout the country has presented the opportunity to provide service for their customers' second or vacation homes. Newport Furnishings Minneapolis has been featured in the Star Tribune and *Furnishings* magazine.



## Young Woman Business Owner of the Year **Kelly Wold Smith** *Futura Marketing, Inc.*

Kelly started Futura Marketing in 2000 after graduating from the University of St. Thomas. Starting with just one employee, within four years the company had grown to five full-time

employees, and expects to double in size by 2006. Kelly's key accomplishments at Futura include being selected as the exclusive marketing agency for Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream Shops for over four years, and becoming a preferred agency for Ecolab Institutional Marketing.

Futura's success can be attributed to Kelly's goal-oriented, open-communication management style. Kelly strives to promote from within and believes this style of mentoring has resulted in her employees remaining loyal and dedicated throughout the challenging years of growing a small business.



## Young Woman Business Owner of the Year **Suzanne McGann** *Voyageur I.T.*

Suzanne joined Voyageur I.T. in 2000 as Senior Project Manager, was promoted to President the next year, subsequently became co-owner, and became sole owner in 2003. Last year she

led an effort to open a branch office in Denver. With a steady, focused vision, Suzanne has kept Voyageur I.T. profitable and growing during economic uncertainty for technology companies. She has fine-tuned its revenue streams and brought renewed focus to profit centers like maintenance plans, project management, business consulting and customer service.

Today, 30% of the company's annual revenue comes from web-site maintenance plans, a previously untapped market. Overall, web projects have increased over three years ago, and client retention rates stay at a powerful 92%.

Suzanne was named one of the "Top 25 Women to Watch in the Twin Cities" by *The Business Journal* in 2004, and has won several awards from the Association of Women In Communications. She is frequently consulted by the Twin Cities media for her knowledge of web design/development and Internet trends, and speaks to business groups in Minnesota and Colorado.



## Vision Award **Grace Ward** *The Woman's Club of Minneapolis*

Grace started at The Woman's Club in 2000 with an extensive background in special events. As membership director, she saw an opportunity to attract new members by promoting events and activities for professional working women and men. She has accomplished her goal by creating a Member Business Networking Event that allows members to promote their businesses and services. She also created a membership category for non-profit directors, making the Woman's Club available to agencies that focus on the needs of women and children. Grace is constantly working on connecting women with other women, helping to forge and facilitate many new business relationships.

With a passion for women's causes, she has volunteered with the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce Taskforce for the Making a Difference Luncheon and Suited by TwinWest Clothing Drive for seven years. She has also been a member of the executive committee of the Upper Midwest Membership Directors Association for four years.



## Wise Woman Award **Caren Schweitzer** *Creative Resources*

Caren started Creative Resources in 1995 as a home-based business. Within three years she had moved to an office, hired an administrative assistant and sales had doubled. In 2000 Creative Resources earned the sole license for the Minnesota State Fair Gift Shop, increasing

sales by 100%. The next year Caren added a partner, and now has a staff of six. She successfully kept Creative Resources growing despite the economic downturn of 2002-2003. In 2005, she plans to add two sales positions and expects to realize another 100% increase in sales.

Caren demonstrates her commitment to supporting the growth and success of women by doing business with other woman-owned businesses, serving as a role model to other women business owners and taking on visible leadership roles in the community.