

Special Report

Empowering women in US



"In the US, we have a problem with young girls. When they get to High School, they don't become interested in Science. It's very common."



Past President of the Association of Cultural Centre Services, Sabah (PTPS), Puan RH Naida Yasin (right) sitting her views during the workshop.

Mary Chin
 Empowering women, the United States Ambassador has an incredible programme called Wynette (Women's Networking) under Small Business Administration (SBA).
 Whitney Keyes, 42, an author, business advisor, motivational speaker and digital media personality from Seattle, Government empowers women from the minority groups.
 "I am sometimes a part of the Small Business Administration (SBA). Through Wynette (Women's Networking), we work among women in different communities once a month.
 "One month, we bring in a speaker who might be an accountant, and the next month, it might be someone who does marketing. Women pay a very small amount like US\$25 to attend those talks," she said in an interview.
 Keyes, who is the Director of Whitney Keyes Productions, said women empowerment is also achieved via mass electronic media.
 "If you are a woman-owned business, you may get access to funds. We have the same issues in hand as we know that women are educated and empowered, they will educate their whole family.
 Local banks, she added, will help and offer financing to women.
 "Maybe they don't have a perfect business plan but they have a good idea and need help for that."
 Asked whether the banks are strict and require a business plan in black and white, Keyes replied: "Yes and No, again I think for some of the small businesses, some banks are not as strict. They are willing to work and help a woman put together a business plan. The approach is more collaborative."
 In addition, the Young Women's Christian Association

(YWCA) a non-profit organisation, also carries out a special programme to help women and girls.
 "For example, I am a volunteer with YWCA and we help disadvantaged young girls. Some of them don't have a caregiver at home. What we do is bringing in career women to show them (disadvantaged girls) what they could be."
 "We teach them how to make resumes and offer job training. That way, the girls become more employable in the labour market. Yes, they have to compete for jobs," she said.
 Keyes is conducting a series of this workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Kota Bharu, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching.
 "What impressed Keyes was that almost all of the participants at the workshop do social work.
 "As much, they are subordinated in the community, so it's important to fund and support them. Yes, absolutely."
 Despite the feminist movement in the US in the 1960s and 1970s, which advocated gender equality for women, and the emancipation of women, Keyes said women are still striving for it (gender equality).
 "But we are a big country with a diverse population, so there must be continuous education to make sure people pay attention for what they are working."
 Examining the issue, she thinks, sometimes it's women's own challenge.
 "For instance, we (women) don't ask for a raise as much as the men might ask. Don't get me wrong, we have all equal pay for equal work.
 "Let's take my pay as an example. What I meant to Microsoft, I was so grateful to have that job that I was just happy with what they gave me. But I had a male colleague and he said, 'Oh, I am making this much money. And I wouldn't believe that I am getting more money than you.' Well, I did not accept what they give me."
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The social support entrepreneurs inspired by Whitney's programme during the talk entitled 'Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship' at the Penampang Library premises.

US business advisor empowers woman entrepreneurs

By Maribel Buelor
PENAMPANG: Business advisor and digital media personality Whitney Keyes from the United States of America, has been invited to give a talk on networking, planning, marketing, finance and the power of social entrepreneurship to local women entrepreneurs at the library here yesterday.
 The two-day seminar ending today is entitled, "Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship".
 It is a series of workshops aim to empower women to advance themselves economically and socially.
 It is believed that empowering women will have a positive impact on their families, communities, societies and country.
 Whitney gave real examples to participants who are already doing business and also to women who are just starting the business world.
 "It is hard for women to be away from their job. In the US most women will start with their business from home. This is what we call networking," she said, adding that friends can help in expanding their network for business purposes.
 Whitney said instead of waiting for women to be successful, take their



Whitney Keyes

because she did not have clients coming to her place. She did not have money to advertise.
 "Due to her financial problem, she started sending emails to her friends to tell them she had entry into the market for marketers and publishers. The response was so good that now she has her own brand using natural resources."
 Whitney said the participants that marketing should be done at the lowest cost.
 "If possible, do it for free by sending emails or talk to friends about your products," she said.
 Whitney had developed many of her unique high-tech marketing campaigns and had won two awards from the International TV. However, she was not working and producing a commercial for Microsoft.
 After leaving Microsoft in 2004, she started WNK Productions, a computer that connects through management and communication training solutions for organisations worldwide.
 Keyes had served on the board of Delta for Success Seattle to be assist disadvantaged women.
 The talk yesterday was hosted by Puan RH Naida Yasin, a community based voluntary organisation, to help raise the quality of life of indigenous communities.

'Tremendous scope for social entrepreneurs'

Mary Chin
PENAMPANG: There are growing opportunities for social entrepreneurship around the world.
 Whitney Keyes, 42, an American Web TV show host, consultant, motivational speaker cum blogger, from Seattle, Washington, said Thursday this is because governments alone are unable to provide for the people in their countries.
 "In the United States, we have a budget cut down and our Government worked very hard to provide social services but it cannot do it all on its own. So, we have a new business sector that is developing in our midst.
 "And in the United States, its vision has been tremendous growth opportunity for social entrepreneurship. More and more businesses are calling themselves social entrepreneurs because people care about that and want to do business with the social entrepreneur.
 "They (people) know that they (businesses) have got a heart. They are not making money but helping the community," she said at the Workshop on Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship held at the Penampang branch library here.
 In her presentation, Keyes said social entrepreneurship has existed for a long time.
 She defined social entrepreneurship as one that focuses on social issues like poverty, hunger, child abuse and violence against women, using business approaches.
 "It's using a business model to address a social issue, that is, doing business and helping the community at the same time. While you have a business mind, you also care about social issues, leading to a solution.
 "Hence, social entrepreneurs are people who are not just focused on making a profit. They are also focused on making a difference in their com-



Keyes

munity or the world," she explained.
 Explaining how a social enterprise functions, Keyes said basically, it recognises a social problem and uses a blend of approach to advance causes.
 "In other words, social entrepreneurs treat social issues like a business with the characteristics of traditional non-profit and proven business principles.
 "I think, so often a social group is trying to solve a problem but they are not using business methodology. And so they can be more efficient if they have a plan in this direction."
 The one-day workshop for some 50 women entrepreneurs is part of the Programme for the US Embassy in Malaysia - Promoting Human Rights, Democracy and Economic Opportunity: Empowering Women Through Leadership and Entrepreneurship Skills Development.
 Also present were the US Embassy Senior Program Specialist Chew Wing Fook, State Library Director Wang Yui Yin and Pacos Trust Executive Director, Anne Lasimbang.
 During the workshop, the women were given a written exercise on how they would play a role as a social entrepreneur.
 Keyes is best known as the host, writer and producer of Whitney and Wyatt.com, a bi-monthly internet television talk show for women. Currently, she does business as Director of Whitney Keyes Productions, based in Seattle.
 Speaking to the Daily Express later, Keyes said social entrepreneurship has been happening for as long as business has been going.
 "For example, if I own a bakery, maybe I will give poor people bread. If social entrepreneurs have no money to give away, they can offer other things like education.

"This concept has been going on, it just hasn't had a label. That's my opinion. I don't know if it's just in the United States but in the US, this concept is taking off. It's becoming more popular for a business to call itself a social entrepreneur because the consumers won't buy from you unless you are being responsible. This occurs not just at the corporate level now but even in small business," she pointed out.
 Social entrepreneurship is happening globally, according to Keyes.
 "My point is that it's happening everywhere; it's not just a big corporation but also the restaurant and your community."
 Asked why social entrepreneurship is important, she said it is the wave of the future. "The social entrepreneurship movement is growing. If you are going to be in business today, you cannot just make money and look after yourself. You are not going to succeed unless you take care of the community."
 On social entrepreneurs in the United States, Keyes said American television host cum producer, Oprah Winfrey, and reportedly the most influential woman in the world, is a perfect example of the social entrepreneur.
 "She makes good money but she also gives back to society. She has done amazing things for communities in Africa. She promotes authors. If she mentions one book, all the women in the United States will buy that book.
 "So many businesswomen think she has good values and good leadership qualities. She is motivating a lot of women in the US."
 According to Keyes, many businesswomen want to be like Oprah Winfrey.
 "She is very inspirational because she is smart, worked very hard and struggled with issues of abuse and body image and lots of things like that."