

Women encouraged to lead

POWHERHOUSE



Christine Wood Photo

Charlene SanJenko, who recently launched powHERhouse looks on as Shelley McDade, CEO of the Sunshine Coast Credit Union, speaks about women taking on positions of authority in business during the powHERhouse networking mixer on Oct. 17 at the Sunshine Coast Olive Oil Co.

OCTOBER 25, 2013

CHRISTINE WOOD/STAFF WRITER

A networking mixer to encourage strong female leadership in the community also offered some reasoning behind powHERhouse- — Gibsons Coun. Charlene SanJenko's new endeavor that fulfills a dream dating back to her arrival on the Coast.

A self-professed seeker and filler of gaps in services, SanJenko realized after moving to the Coast in 2000, there was a need to support, encourage and empower women to reach their full potentials here.

The need to pay the bills trumped her ability to start a support service however, and instead SanJenko started a personal training business.

"So, 13 years later, I'm a very good trainer, and its time to start powHERhouse," SanJenko said during the Oct. 17 mixer at the Sunshine Coast Olive Oil Co.

She officially launched powHERhouse earlier this month.

"A big part of what powHERhouse will bring to the table is actually coordinating, being that in between person that recognizes your talent, what you're all about, what your mission is, and actually helping you find some opportunities that are going to bust you forward, whatever that is," SanJenko said.

"You can call it business development, you can call it headhunting, call it whatever you want, but on the Sunshine Coast it's really needed, very much so. We are not living up to our capacity and our potential here, whether in business or whether in leadership."

SanJenko invited a handful of local women who were bucking that trend to share their thoughts on why strong female leaders are needed on the Coast and where opportunities and challenges exist.

Shelley McDade, CEO of the Sunshine Coast Credit Union said the problems faced by women locally are the same ones women face globally, especially the fear of "leaving a tribe."

McDade likened circles of friends at work to a tribe that can provide support and said it's hard for women to leave that comfort.

"Sometimes women just say no to an opportunity because they're afraid they won't be able to recreate that tribe," McDade said, noting the fear is often unfounded and shouldn't be a reason to say no to a better position. "We need to toughen up a bit.

Cathie Roy, associate publisher of Coast Reporter noted a strong women's business network could help women succeed.

"If you had someone that you really trusted that you could talk to and know it wouldn't go any further, I think that would be a wonderful thing," she said.

Sechelt Coun. Darnelda Siegers said leadership isn't always easy, but that women need to "bring the voice of the female," to political and business arenas.

"While men may try to express what they think our views are, they can't speak for us in our voice because they don't have our own unique views," Siegers said.

SanJenko made her view known that women can and should be in positions of power and said she feels powHERhouse will help spur women on to great things.

"Because I think if you've got the confidence of a tribe behind you, the courage, because you literally feel stronger in your body and you've got some courage to take the next step and you've got the capacity, whatever the pieces are that are missing for you...there's no other option than for us to bust ahead," SanJenko said.

"The world is so craving female leaders and what we have to offer."

To find out more about powHERhouse, including upcoming events and how to get involved go to www.powherhouse.com.