

East End Women's Network celebrates three decades of business connections

By [Julie Lane](#) | September 20, 2011 in [Business](#), [Featured Stories](#)



BARBARAELEN KOCH PHOTO Caroline London (left) speaks with East End Women's Network incoming president Paula Daniel at Ms. London's Riverhead business J. Sauer Opticians.

Thirty years after its founding, the East End Women's Network is undergoing a rebirth of sorts.

It's not that the group has died away — it still has 80 active members — but at its height there were about 150, said Paula Daniel, the organization's president. Now the group created by women to support women-owned businesses is making a new push for new members.

Their membership drive kickoff takes place at the Hotel Indigo in Riverhead on Wednesday, Sept. 28.

When Jeanne Block who owned Hampton Greenery in Westhampton first launched the network, it was with the realization that career-minded, but geographically scattered, East End women could benefit from interacting and supporting one another's ventures, Ms. Daniel said.

"Jeanne would be so proud to see the network celebrate its 30th anniversary," she said about the group's founder, now deceased.

But there was another force that gave rise to the network 30 years ago. Rotary, the Lion's Club and other such business-oriented groups were closed to women back in 1981. There was no business organization where women found a welcome, Ms. Daniel said. All have since had a change of heart and opened their memberships, but the network still affords a special place for its members to find a camaraderie they haven't always found elsewhere, she said.

"These women really make best friends for life," said Carolyn London, one of the group's early members and a former Woman of the Year honoree, chosen for her support of women in the community. Those honored aren't always network members, Ms. Daniel said.

This year, for example, the network recognized Stacy Quarty, president of Lucia's Angels, an East End organization supporting women with late stage cancers.

To honor Ms. Quarty, the network has pledged \$50,000 to create Lucia's Room at Southampton Hospital for patients going through difficult surgical procedures who need palliative care and/or end-of-life services.

The network also supports holiday food drives for Island Harvest, and Dress for Success, contributing gently used clothing for disadvantaged women in need of professional attire for job interviews and jobs.

In addition, EEWN It provides scholarships for students based on essays they write on why it's important for women to support one another.

And it publishes a directory of services members offer and promotes members' companies in other ways.

"I owe East End Network," said Ms. London, who operates Sauer Optical in Riverhead. She credits the network's support for helping expand her customer base and providing business advice that she, in turn, wants to pass on to younger businesswomen.

That's an indication of the networks non-competitive nature, Ms. Daniel said.

"You get uninhibited because people are so nice," Ms. London agreed.

Ironically, nothing in the EEWN bylaws prohibits men from joining and there was a time when a man from PrimeAmerica, who was looking to expand that companies female workforce, joined the group. But he has since transferred out of the area and no other men have stepped forward, Ms. Daniel said.

The group holds monthly dinner meetings at various restaurants on both the North and South Forks where members network with one another and have opportunities to showcase their businesses, exchange advice and often hear from speakers on various topics such as email marketing, small businesses publicity, negotiating and resolving personnel issues, Ms. Daniel said.

Annual membership dues are \$50 or \$25 for junior members between the ages of 16 and 23.

The celebratory dinner at Hotel Indigo on Sept. 28, begins with cocktails and networking at 5:30, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$35 for members with advance reservations or \$40 for members who don't book ahead and for non-members.

Call Ceil Carpenter at 727-3777 or email her at ccarpenter@lifb.com or visit the group's website at eewn.org.

jlane@timesreview.com

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