

# Businesswoman's alliance eager for kickoff tonight

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By SLOAN BREWSTER, Press staff

MIDDLETOWN — With a snow storm halting its first scheduled meeting, the Middlesex Businesswoman's Alliance is eager for tonight's kickoff.

The MBA, as members like to refer to the new council of the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, is a group of businesswomen from for-profit and not-for-profit businesses alike, said Downtown Coordinator Cathy Duncan, the group's connection to the chamber.

"We can all be on the same playing field," she said of the variety of women that will be involved.

The first meeting will be about more than just business after work — which is actually the concept for all public meetings — and will include education, networking and, most of all, fun.

Tonight, the fun involves hypnotherapist and licensed professional counselor Michael Smithwick, who will talk about the bully inside all people and ways to silence its negative voice.

"That's that internal bully, the one that beats you up," Smithwick said. "The one that says you coulda, woulda, shoulda done things better. Women sometimes listen to it more than men do."

Smithwick, who uses hypnosis along with therapy on a wide range of issues, including anxiety, panic attacks, depression and traumatic stress disorder, will also discuss the difference between a hypnotist and a hypnotherapist.

A hypnotist must fill out a one-page form and send a check to the state in order to be licensed. A hypnotherapist, on the other hand, must attend college, graduate school and meet field requirements before taking a painstaking test and getting a license, he said.

"There's some difference there, isn't there?" he said. "If you're seeking professional help and you go to most hypnotists, you might end up with somebody who doesn't even have a high school diploma."

He added that registered hypnotists tend to charge the same fee as more schooled hypnotherapists.

"They practice in a crack in the law," Smithwick said. "No one has ever bothered to close the gap."

"I'm just gonna talk about a variety of subjects," Smithwick said, adding the information will be useful for folks in their business or personal lives.

Nancy Waterman, owner of Network IT in Middletown, is a founding member and co-chair of the MBA. She has heard Smithwick speak in the past and found the discussion educational and informative.

"He spoke a long time ago and he was really good," she said. "I think he was just an interesting person. He's already taught me there's a difference between a hypnotist and hypnotherapist."

The MBA will have a small and connected executive steering committee that will meet monthly and on a regular basis will also host bigger, more fun meetings like the kickoff.

“We find that women enjoy helping other women [and] feel comfortable in an environment with other women,” Waterman said. “We want to be able to educate and enrich each other.”

The MBA may be about more than just business, but business is one of the important components, she said. She hopes it will not only enrich women’s personal lives, but more importantly, advance their businesses.

The kickoff was originally scheduled for Jan. 28, but snow caused a change in plans. There were 60 women signed up for that date and Waterman is unsure how many will attend tonight.

Laura Francis, first selectwoman of Durham, along with her executive assistant and Town Clerk Kim Garvis, are among women enthused about the group and who planned to attend the January kickoff, but have conflicts tonight.

“Businesswomen in Middlesex County sometimes have business to do,” Francis said. “So it’s a big bust for the town of Durham actually.”

Francis plans to attend the meeting planned for March 11. That meeting will be at the Russell Library and will include guest speaker David O’Brien, author of “101 Leadership Lessons for Work and Life.”

Waterman believes the MBA is a group whose time has come.

Unlike the 1980s, when such a group was suggested, women nowadays are less competitive and more willing to work together and help one another, she said.

Tonight’s meeting will be at the Hawthorne Inn in Berlin from 5 to 6:30 p.m. and is open to all businesswomen.

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