



## The Oregonian

### Mom's busy with her own business today

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Mom-owned businesses thrive in Portland, from hobbyists who sell goods or services from home to professionals who reinvented their careers after Baby.

Saturday, 40 mom-owned enterprises will gather at Portland State University for The Mom Shop, where mothers can trade notes and bring their families along.

Think trade show meets craft fair meets playground. The Mom Shop will feature activities for children, workshops for families, entertainment and a raffle to benefit the Bradley-Angle House women's shelter. Portland Mamas Inc., a networking organization for mom entrepreneurs, organized the event.

"We wanted to have an event for local mom businesses, but all that was available were craft fairs or larger trade shows," says Marlynn Schotland, who started Portland Mamas on Mother's Day 2006. "We wanted something in the middle . . . to show Portlanders what's available right in their backyard. We want families to come and learn they can find everything they need locally."

Women-owned businesses form a large chunk of Portland's business picture, according to data from the Center for Women's Business Research in Washington, D.C.

As of 2006, the Portland metro area (including Vancouver) had 62,000 privately held businesses with 51 percent or more female ownership, the center estimates. The businesses represent one-third of the area's privately held firms, employ about 44,000 people and generate \$7.7 billion in annual sales. And according to center data, the number of such firms in the metro area increased 41.5 percent from 1997 to 2006.

There's no way to know how many of the women are moms, but Schotland says she receives an e-mail a day from someone asking about membership in Portland Mamas.

"The fact that in one year of launching we have 150 members with a waiting list of approximately 40 women tells me that the numbers are growing," she says.

Alisa Gaylord, who launched Gaia Baby Food from her home in May, will have a booth with samples at The Mom Shop. She says her son's birth inspired her to change course from her corporate sales job.

"I created a niche for myself, which still allows me to be home with my son," she says. Networking with other mom entrepreneurs, she says, has led to help with public relations and a graphic designer for her logo.

Robyn Taylor Barbon, who started Folklore Media three years ago with her husband, will also have a booth. The mother of two daughters says she sought support from other moms from the start. "It's an incredible network of women, and it has helped in every aspect of the business," she says.

"I belong to a number of networking organizations, and this isn't hard-core networking. It's about supporting each other and finding a place to help each other. The challenge is running a family and running a business at the same time and balancing those."

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