

WOMEN, UNITE

The Women Entrepreneurs NETwork has put together an electronic "old girls' network" for local women entrepreneurs.

Founded late last year, the NETwork is just that: a Web site (www.wenpa.org) where women can exchange questions and ideas and get to know each other better. It's not a place for those who are new in business or just starting a company, but for "high-growth women entrepreneurs," says **Rena Kopelman**, the network's director of development.

Kopelman, a former corporate attorney, says she was drawn to direct the NETwork because she has been around entrepreneurs all her life. Both her parents started businesses when she was growing up, and her husband is now starting his second business.

The NETwork came together following a study by the Pennsylvania Economic League that found there was no area organization or infrastructure for successful women entrepreneurs. Sponsored by the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania, it received a one-year grant from the state Department of Community and Economic Development.

The site features:

- a calendar of events from groups that would interest women entrepreneurs
- a news section with articles from local papers as well as press releases or articles about the women in the network
- profiles of successful entrepreneurs and women who have won awards from across the state, including the Pennsylvania 50 Best Women in Business and the Women of Distinction awards.
- a question-and-answer bulletin board that tackles questions such as how to get capital, how to determine from a resume if an employee is qualified, and how and where to market a business.

For information, contact Kopelman at renakop@aol.com.

Before You Quit Your Day Job...

If you have been downsized or are just fed up with your current job, starting your own home business could be the ticket — to disaster.

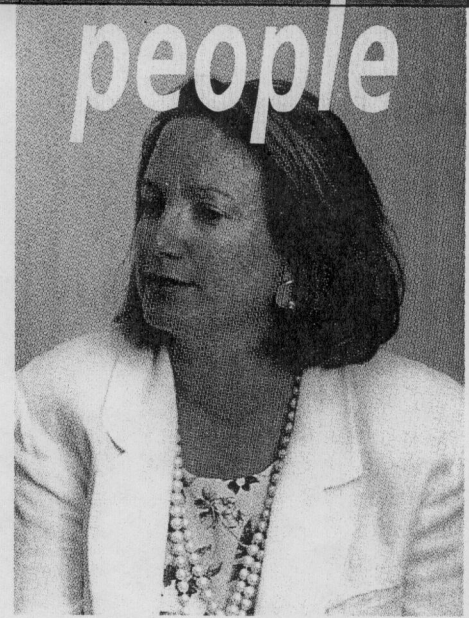
Lesley Mallow Wendell, executive director of Options, Inc., a nonprofit educational corporation in Philadelphia, recommends that you consider the following if you're serious about working at home.

- ? Do you like the camaraderie of an office, and will you be happy without that six months from now?
- ? Are you able to handle the secretarial and bookkeeping functions of a home office, or will you have to outsource them?
- ? Do you have any knowledge of the tax laws and record keeping required for home businesses?
- ? Which of your skills can you best market?
- ? Do you have ready clients whom you can tap?

"People need to look at it as making a professional move and something they have to think through," Wendell says. "It's not just like opening up a lemonade stand on the corner."

Before starting, really think about whether you have a service to offer that is unique to the market — and whether there's a market for what you do. If you do decide to take the plunge, here are some ways to make a smooth transition:

- Attend a workshop on how to run a small business.
- Set up an informal board of advisors. Fill it with people



Lesley Mallow Wendell

who can assist you in networking, writing a business plan or designing a marketing strategy. They are not mentors who will do all your work for you, but can guide you in the right direction.

- If you need people to talk to about work, put together a group of people in a similar position and meet occasionally to share information or discuss challenges.
- Be prepared for a salary cut. Certainly, many people have talents that will take them anywhere, but the majority struggle at first. Save some money beforehand so you're financially stable if it takes a few months for enough money to come in to cover your salary.

Those home business owners with the most success, Wendell says, are "those who really thought it through and are performing a service or producing something that there is a market for. You have to really understand your target and your market and be aware of who your competition is."

For more information, visit the Options Web site (www.optionscareers.org) or contact Wendell at lmwendell@optionscareers.org.