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THAI TRIO WINS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FROM INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

BANGKOK, THAILAND (March 24, 2006) - Three Thai businesswomen have been awarded business development grants by Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World™ (LWEW), an international non-profit woman's organization. The awards will be announced at the Forum for "Acknowledging and Exchanging Experiences with Thai Business Women" by H.E. Wattana Muangsuk, Minister of Social Development and Human Security.

The first place "Take the Next Step" grant for \$10,000 USD went to Manaya Kapwathanaworasuk (31). The second and third place grants of \$2,500 USD each went to Pim Kemasingki (32) and Monrat Sarapab (47), respectively.

Ms. Kapwathanaworasuk owns Aiyara Arts & Crafts Company, Ltd, a maker of handmade brass and bronze castings used in creating unique door handles featuring Thai-inspired designs. She plans to use the grant money to introduce Thai art to the international business community through this decorative - yet functional - product.

Ms. Kemasingki's Trisila Company Limited, publishes the monthly *Citylife* and the bi-monthly *CityNow!* The grant money will be used to train employees at her two English language publications in such areas as sales, technology, design, management and customer service.

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Three Thai Businesswomen Receive Grants from LWEW/ 2

Mrs. Sarapab's company, Rai Khun Mon, produces alternative organic and health foods indigenous to the rural farm region of Kanchanaburi, Thailand. The grant money will be used to purchase new technology to enhance the company's production capacity and to support farm education and training programs for local villagers and children.

Each winner applied for the "Take The Next Step" grant by filling out a questionnaire designed by the LWEW. Each applicant was asked to describe the services their company provides, to identify their key competitor(s) and to explain what sets their business/product/service apart from others. The applicants were also asked for a detailed business plan showing how the \$10,000 grant would help them to take their business to the next step.

"Women business owners in many parts of the world still face challenging cultural barriers," said Cheryl Womack, Chairperson of Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World. "The three women chosen today demonstrate the spirit and determination needed to overcome these barriers and to succeed in today's business environment. We salute these dedicated entrepreneurs as they 'take the next step.'"

About Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World: LWEW is a U.S. based non-profit organization that raises the visibility of successful entrepreneurial women and increases public awareness of women entrepreneurs' contributions to the global economy. LWEW includes over 300 female entrepreneurial honorees, representing over 50 countries, whose businesses collectively generate more than \$200 Billion US and employ more than 525,000 people.

Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World™ was founded to identify and honor top women entrepreneurs and to heighten public awareness about their impact on the global economy. The first award ceremony took place in Paris in 1997. The group has recognized more than 300 women business owners from more than 50 countries spanning six continents. For more information on The Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World™ visit www.leadingwomen.org.

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