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## A network to help women network

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Local women are networking with a group they describe as warm, inviting, comfortable, and even relaxing. It's called Rochester Women's Network. Men aren't invited. Leaving men out of networking makes the atmosphere more laid back for women, according to Angella Luyk, the co-chair of free networking events for Rochester Women's Network.

"We share a common bond and we can be ourselves. We're nurturers so everyone welcomes you with open arms. It's easier to talk, we're more willing to help each other," Luyk said.

Luyk received a lot of help from members of Rochester Women's Network when she started her own business at age 32, Midnight Janitorial Inc. She says members provided at least half of her clients.

"Three years ago, I knew nothing about networking. People here helped me out. I learned how to sell without being forceful. When I came here they took me aside and gave me some tips. Here at RWN, it's not about what's in it for me, but rather what's in it for you; how I can help you."

Luyk credits the group for helping her gain self confidence. She won some awards and rose to her current leadership position within Rochester Women's Network. Luyk and Heather Smith started organizing free networking events for members last September.

"We try to make it low key, to get together and chat. I find the more you put into it, the more you get out of it," Smith said.

Besides networking events, Rochester Women's Network also offers educational workshops on career development. There is a marketing group, a finance group, a leadership group and many seminars on subjects that can help advance the members' businesses. There are also many interest-based groups such as a book club, a wine group, even a young professionals group!

One young professional member, Pamala Plumadore, attends at least one networking event every week in the Rochester area. Plumadore, age 22, is a year out of college and works in sales. She finds some other networking events intimidating, but not at Rochester Women's Network.

"I think women are more warm and inviting. They get to know you first, and then they talk business," she said.

Plumadore enjoys the laid back atmosphere of the free networking events.

The connections she makes have benefited her career.

"Networking is the best way to find people who are in need of my services. It's making that impression and developing relationships that goes a long way. Cold calling doesn't work any more," Plumadore said.

Another young professional member has found people who work in her field at Rochester Women's Network events. Cathy Shannon is in transition and looking for a new job in health administration after being laid off. However, she's not just attending events as a job seeker.

"I think this will be a nice long term venue because there are people who have taken a lot of steps in their career. So there is a lot to learn from them. This is a long term career development group," Shannon said.