

Itasca Bank & Trust Co. Celebrates the 20th Anniversary of the Women's Initiative

In 1992, Itasca Bank & Trust Co. offered its first seminar specifically for women: *Financial Planning for Women, Making Quality Choices*. Women, “whether in early adulthood or post-retirement, single or married, wanting to start investing or already into investments”, were invited to attend a seminar. The seminar was described as a free seminar for women only; subsequent seminars would be described in the same way. During the nineties, there were three additional financial seminars for women. The response to all these seminars was overwhelmingly positive. The winning combination for all of these seminars was that they were specifically for women and were presented by highly qualified professionals, all of which resonated with the attendees, who felt they and their questions about money were being taken seriously.

In early 2000, because the response to the financial seminars for women had been so positive, Bank President Jack Mensching proposed the idea of presenting additional seminars for women to the Bank's Senior Management, and the decision was made to develop a branded program for women. It was decided that the program would be called the Women's InitiativeSM.

The Women's Initiative would mirror the Bank's values. Itasca Bank had a long history of being close with its customers – listening to them, treating them with respect, and helping them achieve their goals; these were qualities that would be integral to the Women's Initiative and were qualities that would particularly resonate with women. Additionally, the Women's Initiative was a perfect fit with Itasca Bank's standing as a community bank that was well known for its community involvement and had a reputation of leadership, credibility, honesty, ethics, a sense of permanence, strength and integrity. The Women's Initiative would serve a wide community – the community of women, no matter where they lived. One would not have to be a customer of Itasca Bank & Trust Co. to join the Women's Initiative; there would be no fee to join, nor to attend the programs. Those enrolling would simply be added to a confidential mailing list in order to receive information on upcoming events.

While the initial foray into seminars for women was focused solely on financial topics, by 1999 the role of women was changing. Women were not only taking over their parents' businesses, but were starting their own. More women were working outside the home and were balancing jobs and families. Stress on the job was being recognized as taking a toll on health, and that there was a need to manage that stress. So it was decided that the Women's Initiative would be more holistic and have a broader appeal to women: topics for programs would not only be financial, but also there would be programs on health and wellness, as well as those that were inspirational, or would be fun to attend. Programs would have a multi-generational appeal. Some would also help women create and grow successful businesses. The mission for the Women's Initiative was developed: to help women create and maximize wellness in all aspects of life: business, personal, health and finance.

During this 20th Anniversary year, the Women's Initiative continues to be true to its initial mission. We continue our focus on topics that make a difference in the lives of women of all ages. We offer women the opportunity to discover, be energized, and connect with each

other. As always, the Women's Initiative will be guided by the values of Itasca Bank & Trust Co., which has made an unprecedented commitment to the Women's Initiative. Together, we will shape the future.