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Enterprising women pool money to 'impact Austin'

Updated: 12/5/2004 7:55:20 PM

By: Paul Brown

What would you do with \$126,000?



Rebecca Powers thought about that after reading an article about a group of people who each contributed some money to make a significant donation to a nonprofit.

"What I did when I read the article. I was on an airplane. I came home and I shared the idea with four friends that I trusted and said, 'What do you think of the idea?' And after some careful consideration, they each decided to give me \$1,000," Powers said.

Amazingly, she got 126 women to contribute \$1,000 - that's \$126,000 and [Impact Austin](#) was born. A check went to the nonprofit LifeWorks for a job-training program for troubled youth.

"To be in a room full of Impact Austin women is an inspiring experience. I think someone told them early on that 120 women could never agree on where to give money, and they set out to show that they could make a single large impact, and they have," LifeWorks executive director Susan McDowell said.

Power stresses the "impact" of Impact Austin. Like legislators, each member gets a vote, with the majority's decision determining which applying agencies get at least \$100,000.

So, if only \$199,000 is raised this year, only one group gets all the money. If they raise \$200,000, means two \$100,000 grants.

"One of the things that happened as a result of sharing our story with a couple of hundred women last year, we found out that women who are passionate, who have a dedication to a cause and a singleness of purpose, can come together and really make a difference," Powers said.

Raising her family became Power's career after a successful stint as an IBM executive. Now, she's busier than ever.

"I read about this article at a time when I needed to focus on something positive. And it just grabbed my heart," Power said.

The death of Power's brother Peter was the inspiration she used to press ahead with Impact Austin. It's no accident that the grant winners are announced on Peter's birthday, June 12. The grants are called "For Pete's Sake."

"I shared the idea with my husband. I wouldn't leave him alone about it. And he said 'you know, you really need to try to do this because I can tell it's important to you.' And from that moment forward we just never looked back," Power said.

And that means get ready for an even bigger Impact Austin.

Rebecca says she plans to start a pilot program for the daughters of Impact Austin members. They'll each contribute \$100 and decide who gets their money.



The advertisement features the University of Phoenix Online logo on the left. To its right, the text "NOW OFFERING" is displayed in red. Below this, a white box contains the text "Bachelor of Science in Communications". On the right side of the ad is a photograph of a smiling woman. Further right is a red button with the text "LEARN MORE" and three white arrows pointing to the right.

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