



# Campus Women



## Women Entrepreneurs

by Nicole Bellefleur

It's a fact: women face different challenges than men in their entrepreneurial roles. Women who venture into their own businesses invariably must overcome greater obstacles than their male counterparts. Despite these greater obstacles, however, more and more women are opening the doors of their own businesses every day. These successful women have beat the odds and now have thriving businesses to show for it.

The following statistics about women entrepreneurs are taken from a recent issue of *Common Ground*, which reported on a survey by Monica Belcour, Ronald J. Burke and Helene Lee - Gosselin for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

- \* Women are starting businesses at three times the rate of men.
- \* More than 200 000 won-men now classify themselves as self-starters.
- \* Average started-up costs for women are much lower than for men: \$78 000 versus \$104 000.
- \* Women start businesses mainly in retail and service sectors.
- \* Most women entrepreneurs are married with children, and find themselves juggling the responsibilities of home and work.
- \* Women entrepreneurs make about one third less than their male counter parts.

One of these ambitious entrepreneurs is Charlottetown resident, Dawn Ambler. Dawn is the single mother of five children ranging in age from 4 to 22, a full time student at UPEI and owner/operator of her own business, "A-1 Computer services"

A-1 Computer Services officially began operation on December 1st, 1990. It is a desktop publishing company, which edits and designs books, calenders, flyers, pamphlets, etc. The UPEI yearbook, as well as the student handbook are examples of projects taken on by A-1 Computer Services.

Dawn had worked as an accountant prior to beginning

her studies, but decided that she wanted to be her own boss. She saw a need for this type of business, and knowing that it would take a few years to establish a reputation, decided to begin right away, while pursuing her degree.

Getting started wasn't easy, and one of the hardest things was getting a loan to finance her computer equipment. Most banks consider a single student with five children risky, and are reluctant to extend credit. They wouldn't accept her computer equipment as collateral, because it would be considered obsolete almost as soon as it was put into place due to constant technological improvements. Dawn was lucky however, to have friends who helped arrange for the computer to be in her home. In return for the favour, she does work for them free of charge.

As one can well imagine, managing a business and a household while working toward a degree is very difficult. She says that it is important to prioritize. Because she is so close to her degree, she can not put it at the bottom of the list, at the same time, she can not put off her work assignments, and of course, she must always be there for her children. One of the advantages of being her own boss is the flexibility of her work schedule. She says that for most self employed individuals, there is no such thing as a "9 to 5" job. Dawn does most of her work on weekends or late at night. She adds that it takes a lot patience and organization. Her children are very supportive of her work, many times, the older ones will cook meals or look after the younger children. As she says, a home-based business is a family business.

In the future, Dawn hopes to be able to devote more of her efforts toward the research, creative design and editing aspects of desktop publishing (these are the areas she enjoys most).

Presently, most of the work she does is in exchange for rewards other than money. Many times, her clients will repay her for her services with such things as free advertisements. Even though she isn't making much money, the exposure she is receiving is priceless, and is helping her to establish a solid