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## Fwd: The Scarsdale Inquirer - Speed mentoring story

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## The Scarzdale Inquirer

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## IBM speed mentors WEDC members

## By JENNIFER LEAVITT-WIPF

At least 130 entrepreneurs — all members of the Women's Enterprise Development Center in Westchester — participated last month in "Big Business Meets Small Business," a speed mentoring event provided and hosted by IBM in Somers. WEDC members had selected three areas they were interested in being mentored in, and then spent 15-minute sessions with one mentor from each one. Nearly 200 IBM volunteers from sales, marketing, IT, human resources, finance and other disciplines were on hand, offering feedback and sharing their expertise.

"Over the years, some of the best inventions, business models, or adaptations of business models have come from small businesses," said Ginni Rometty, senior vice president of sales, market-



Entrepreneurs in their mentoring sessions at IBM.

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ing and strategy. "It's the engine of new ideas for our economy and for economic growth. Curiosity and new thinking are what sets them apart," she reflected. "We're coming out of a recession, and a lot of times, it's the small business entrepreneur who leads the way."

Following her keynote speech, Rometty presented former Scarsdale mayor and WEDC founder, Anne Janiak with an unexpected \$10,000 catalyst grant to further support women entrepreneurs through WEDC programs.

Janiak, who serves as executive director of WEDC, appeared completely surprised. "I never expected that," Janiak told the Inquirer, "IBM is already doing so much to help" entrepreneurial women in Westchester.

Andy Monshaw, general manager of global business partners and mid-market, gave an overview of the resources IBM has established for small and medium businesses. IBM and WEDC have also been working together on a website for local entrepreneurs. The site will serve as an online hub for shared resources, success stories, lessons learned and business networking.

Borrowed from the methods of speed dating, speed mentoring is growing in popularity in business circles. The process focuses on a quick exchange of information with a large number of people, in a short period of time. A mentor might provide advice, resources, a referral or other information. A formal venue and structured methodology can help break through the "who you already know" barrier that often comes with traditional mentoring.

Celebrating IBM's 100th anniversary, IBM designated June 15 as its "centennial day of service," when each IBMer would spend his or her workday participating in service activities.

As Rometty explored the various options, she had an idea. A major, interna-



Ginni Rometty, senior vice president of sales, marketing and strategy at IBM, presented Anne Janiak, executive director of Women's Enterprise Development Center, with a \$10K catalyst grant.

tional company like IBM had mentors from a wide range of expertise right on hand, she thought. "I knew that I wanted to work with entrepreneurs who could benefit from that," said Rometty. Mary Murray, manager of corporate citizenship and corporate affairs, was familiar with WEDC, and the connection was made.

In honor of the centennial, some of the IBM volunteers are mentoring WEDC members for 100 days beyond the speed sessions.

WEDC was chosen as a recipient of the program because of its positive financial impact on Westchester women in business, and the local economy. The organization is a nonprofit that provides women with business guidance, training and support services, whether they are just starting up, or are long established. Members can attend a 15-week entrepreneurial training course, in either Spanish or English, as well as seminars,

work shops and networking events, one-on-one counseling and peer support groups.

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"Ginni's message in the keynote that success comes when we are willing to take a risk and be curious was a message many entrepreneurs needed to hear. At least I did," said life coach Patty Lennon, who runs www.momgetsalife.com.

"I requested and was paired with mentors in legal, sales and business development," Lennon explained. "Having come from a corporate background, I was especially interested in harnessing the knowledge I knew existed at IBM ... The mentors had some brilliant ideas regarding sales and business development. I left with a volume of information on the legal side too."

A catered spread of hors d'oeuvres, beverages and desserts was also provided at the event, but many of the participants were too engaged in the sessions to step away for a bite.

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