

From Dishwashers To Diapers, Moms Are Today's Innovators

(NAPSA)—Moms have been creating solutions to everyday problems for centuries—from eliminating the monster under the bed to creating the perfect dish that highlights all five food groups. Some moms, however, have taken this talent a step further and invented the technologies and everyday conveniences that impact the way we live today.

In fact, nearly half of all privately held businesses (10.4 million) in the United States are owned by women. And while female entrepreneurs have been placed in the spotlight recently, the number of majority women-owned firms has been steadily growing over the past two decades—at around twice the rate of all firms.

The workday for many of these women does not end when they get home. Working moms spend 44 hours at their “work job” and 49.8 at their “mom job” for a total of 93.8 hours each week. While many continue to balance work and home, this trend is inspiring women to devise new ways to get more done each day—from working at home to designing products that can help.

“Taking an idea from concept to reality creates a sense of fear, which can stop many women from considering a business venture,” says Pamela Sarvela, a business development specialist with the University of Minnesota’s Natural Resources Research Institute. “Helping women evaluate the marketplace and the necessary start-up funds is what it takes to get many to the next step.”

In an effort to provide this type of support, Whirlpool brand developed its Mother of Invention Grant Program to help deserving moms bring their innovation dreams to fruition each year. The company recognizes that moms are addressing everyday chal-



lenges in innovative ways and to date has awarded winning moms more than \$130,000 in grant money and guidance to help turn their ideas into a viable business.

Through July 31, moms can submit their business, service or product ideas at www.whirlpool.com/moms. This year, the program will recognize moms who develop an environmentally friendly product/service or use natural/recycled materials to create their invention. Five winners will receive up to \$20,000 in grant money, home appliances and an invitation to a business boot camp at company headquarters, where they can learn from marketing, product development and legal experts.

Judging the contest are entrepreneurial moms who understand the challenge of juggling family and business. Guest judges include Julie Aigner-Clark, creator of Baby Einstein and co-founder of The Safe Side; Lori Pope, the creator of an innovative green toy rental program, Baby-Plays; and Mary Anne Amato, the 2006 Mother of Invention Grand Prize Winner and creator of the Quick Change Crib.

“This program sparks the hope of thousands every year and recognizes one of the most overlooked treasures there is, a mother’s ingenuity,” said Amato. “This is one of a very few, perhaps the only, program that understands, inspires and rewards it.”