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Women of Vision get a peek at economic conditions

Submitted by **The City Wire staff** on Thu, 07/23/2009 - 8:03pm.



story and photos by **Linda Kaufenberg**

Approximately 250 women listed attentively as Kathy Deck, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas, talked about economic conditions of the state and Fort Smith region.

Deck was the speaker for the annual Women of Vision luncheon and silent auction hosted Thursday (July 23) by **Girls Inc.** at the Holiday Inn Civic Center.

"All proceeds from the luncheon go to Girls Inc. operating expenses and programs," said

Amanda Daniels, president of the Girls Inc. board. "I have volunteered for Girls Inc. for a number of years because it is a very unique place in Fort Smith that serves only girls. They also offer a very structured and learning environment. In addition Girls, Inc. offers girls-only athletic programs. Most of our members are from low to moderate income levels. When I hear one of the girls talk about what the club means to her, it spurs me to continue as a volunteer."

Deck started her talk with a disclaimer that "this crowd is a little different from my usual audience. Most of the time, I speak to bankers and businessmen." She then explained that a recession is when the gross national product falls for two consecutive quarters, and that the last 50 years haven't seen as many recessions as the previous 50 years. She also said the nation is in a "W" recession in that it gains a little momentum, but then dips again.

She explained that what is most needed to get out of the present recession is for the consumer to have the confidence to start spending again. Deck said 80% of the recovery will depend on the consumer.

"The consumer has to have the confidence that he will have a job today and that the job will be there for him tomorrow," Deck explained. "We have not yet been able to spend ourselves out of the recession."

According to Deck, consumer strategies to survive the recession include switching from sit-down restaurants to fast food, using coupons, buying private label (generic) brands, avoiding impulse buys and eating at home more often.

Deck said the Fort Smith regional economy had escaped the large drop in the economy, but has seen a **larger unemployment rate** than Northwest Arkansas and Little Rock-North Little Rock.

"The larger percentage of unemployment is due primarily to Fort Smith having such a big manufacturing base," she said. "Manufacturing and construction are taking the biggest hits. That is why they are calling this a 'man-cession.' It is affecting more men than women. The education, healthcare and government sectors are actually increasing jobs."



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Kathy Deck, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas, spoke about the different letters of the alphabet used to classify recessions.



Marla Crews and Stacy Beckham write in their bids on the silent auction items.



Sherri Sims, Girls Inc. board member, sells Cynthia Snapp a raffle ticket before the luncheon.



Sitting at the Stephens Inc. table are (back row) Debbie Kennon, Tara Chisum and Hazel Davis and (front row) Leslye Seal, Jennifer Boley, Tina Calvert and Renee Hill.

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The Arvest table included Marcia Davis, Mandy Shaddon, Kayle Taylor and Dyall Wilden.



Dana Craig, vice president of the Girls Inc. board, stops to pose with the featured speaker, Kathy Deck.



Linda Hall, Kimberly Chesier and Shug Meeks



Nancy Smith-Robinson (left) and Jane Goins are shown their table by Girls

Inc. member Hope Anne Durham. Hope Anne is Nancy's granddaughter and Goins' niece.



Dana Craig and Amanda Daniels watch while Kathy Deck prepares her presentation.



Keith Cline and Linda Williams, both Girls, Inc. board members, staffed the registration table and sold a ticket to Polly Kraus.



Monica McKinney, executive director of Girls Inc., talks to Macia White about the summer program at Girls Inc. which has seen an average of 250 girls attending each day.



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Amanda Daniels, president of the board for Girl's Inc., and McKinney pause for a quick photo before the luncheon attendees arrived.

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