

# Awards scheme to honour women entrepreneurs

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By Becky Ausenda

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Just when you thought the award ceremonies were over for the year...an international panel of judges is set to choose a top local businesswoman for a \$10,000 business development award.

Bermuda has been chosen as the host country for the 2003 Leading Women of the World awards ceremony. This year the international award recipients include women from as far afield as Australia, Bangladesh, Italy, Indonesia, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Thailand as well as Canada and the United States.

They will all be descending on the Fairmont Southampton Princess between 27 and 29th April for a gala award dinner and other activities.

The international awards honour female entrepreneurs who have "taken risks, beaten odds and poured their lives into the growth and the development of their communities and companies."

It was founded by the late Anita Alberts to identify and honour top businesswomen from around the world.

The first awards were presented in Paris in 1997. The Bermuda International Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce are assisting an international agency, the Star Group, to organise the event in Bermuda. Local women will also be in the spotlight.

"As the 2003 host country, a woman resident will be awarded a \$10,000 business development grant called 'Take the Next Step' and equally as exciting is the fact that a local resident will be awarded a \$10,000 scholarship, which will go to the woman who best describes how she would use it to fund her education," said Dianne Gordon of the Chamber of Commerce.

The nominations for the local award have not yet been finalised and any local woman who owns at least 50 percent of her company and has been in business for more than three years is eligible. Any person interested in entering should either contact the local Chamber of Commerce or go to [www.thestargroup.org](http://www.thestargroup.org) for an application. As for who the likely winner will be, a quick scan of Bermuda's Who's Who reveals a wealth of women business leaders who deserve recognition.

But since it is an entrepreneurial award, the judges will be looking for women who are heads of their own companies rather than vice presidents of someone else's company.

Contenders might be women such as Cris Valdes-Dapena of the Property Group, Donna Pearman of the Peoples' Pharmacy, Andrea Wilson of First Atlantic Commerce Ltd or Audette Exel and Sharon Beesley of the ISIS Foundation..

Christine Adams of the Star Group said that for the local grant they are looking for people who built a business and have the potential to be a future recipient of the main Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World award.

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