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Photo by Layla Duran

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Women entrepreneurship is front and center at the Middle Country Public Library

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Dreams do come true for the women who showcased their businesses at the 25th Women's EXPO at the Middle Country Public Library Oct. 9.

"I've been here all 25 years. In the beginning we had like 30 or 40 vendors, now we're up to 78, 80, in that area," said

COMMUNITY

Sophia Serlis-McPhillips, director of the Middle Country Public Library.

The 25th annual Women's EXPO attracted more than 2,000 people, according to the organizers.

Every year, the Women's EXPO aims to provide both support and a platform for women entrepreneurs and those in nonprofit organizations to network and promote their products as opportunities like these are rare.

"That's really why we do these events, because I think as a small business, it really makes a difference when you go out and talk to people and tell them about what you're doing," said restaurant owner and vendor Stace Hansen.

Linda Doomes of Eggcellent Quiche was one of the many returning vendors at this year's event.

"There are so many women here that I've met throughout the years, and it's great to see them come back, to see them and their business still thriving, and that they're still doing what



Elizabeth Malafi, left, coordinator of Miller Business Center and Janice Boscarino, principal library clerk, enjoying the Women's EXPO.

Photo by Layla Duran

they enjoy. To me this is a big networking house," Doomes said.

There are also vendors who were first-time participants in the EXPO like Kathrine Hansen, Stace Hansen's daughter.

"We think it's going to be wonderful for us and we want to come back every year for

sure, and at one point we want to take turns and explore," Kathrine said.

The event showcased a variety of items, demonstrating the women's dedication and love for what they do.

"They have wonderful selections of creative, handmade things, whether it's

medicinal or food or texture, art, clothing. And the fact that the women are behind it makes it extra special," said Lesia Macko, an attendee of the EXPO and also a volunteer for Dress for Success, a global nonprofit organization that helps women get back on their feet.

Elizabeth Malafi, the coordinator for the Miller Business Center, one of the organizers for the Women's EXPO, was also a shopper, supporting various vendors. "It's so energizing because everybody is so happy to be here, whether it's a vendor, or a volunteer, or a shopper, it's something people look forward to all year," she said.

With the EXPO, the Miller Business Center hopes that vendors walk away knowing that there is a support system out there for them and that attendees understand the importance of shopping local and keeping their money in their communities, especially on Long Island, Malafi said.

"We really appreciate the opportunity to be here because there are so many female entrepreneurs that are single or they're taking care of themselves or extended family," Stace said.

"Don't give up on your dreams. Keep reaching, keep striving, and one day your purpose will be seen," Doomes said.

Layla Duran is a reporter with The SBU Media Group, part of Stony Brook University's School of Communication and Journalism's Working Newsroom program for students and local media.



Sophia Serlis-McPhillips at the Women's EXPO. Photo by Layla Duran



Linda Doomes of Eggcellent Quiche. Photo by Layla Duran