



Columbus ranked #18 for women in biz, local women respond

By [Melanie McIntyre](#) on October 5, 2011 at 8:00 am

Forbes recently released its list of the 20 best U.S. cities for women in business and Columbus [nabbed the 18th spot](#). The magazine dubbed our fair city the “dark horse,” despite the fact that in 2008 it was the No. 1 up-and-coming tech city and women-led firms are becoming more prevalent here.

In fact, *Forbes* interviewed Allison Finkelstein, senior director of fund management for TechColumbus, who noted that this spring the organization –for the first time– funded a business that is 50 percent women owned and operated.

The business, BringShare, has gone on to receive Series A funding and was the first Ohio company to present at Demo Day, where select startups present their innovations to investors and CEOs.

Finkelstein also mentioned that the number of female investors in Central Ohio is on the upswing.

“When we were raising the third fund, closed last year, we especially focused on recruiting more females,” she says. “We really pushed for that, as we believe more female investors will lead to better investment decisions –you get diversity of opinion and experience– and also access to more female entrepreneurs. We ended up with 22 female members in our new fund– over 20 percent. For all three funds combined, we have 37 women, which represents 13 percent of total members. Compared to most organized angel groups, except for female-only groups, we believe that we are the most gender diverse.”

Anna Harvey, assistant administrator of women’s business ownership for the Small Business Administration and head of the nation’s 110 Women’s Business Centers, told *Forbes* that she sees “an anecdotal correlation” between the number of women in political positions, or positions of power in the community, with the number of women launching small businesses.

Angela Stoll Petro, founder and president of Columbus-based [Two Caterers Contemporary Cuisine](#), expressed a similar sentiment, saying, “We have a lot of strong female leaders in top positions in Columbus and I believe that has translated into a community-wide understanding that women have a lot to contribute to the business landscape.”



Additionally, Stoll Petro says she’s found a “strong sense of mentorship” within the local business community—among women and men.

“From the earliest days of Two Caterers, I have had so many people who have taken a strong interest in seeing the company succeed,” she continues. “And those people directing me to resources, giving critical feedback, and acting as cheerleaders have most definitely played a key role in the company making it past our critical first 10 years.”

Mary Relotto, founder and CEO of Dames Bond, took her praise for Columbus a step further.

“I am a firm believer that if you are a woman, and you live in Columbus, there is no way you can fail in business,” she says. “There exists a variety of female-focused organizations that can help in every aspect of business.”

Dames Bond champions women in business and connects them with consumers, she adds. Women for Economic and Leadership Development teaches women how to be leaders in the corporate and government sectors, and the National Association of Women Business Owners focuses on issues of importance to women in business for themselves.

To generate the “Best Cities for Women in Business” rankings, *Forbes* started with its list of the “Best Places for Business and Careers” for a pool of cities with high projected job growth, education levels and quality of life, and low cost of business.

Then, to tighten the scope for female entrepreneurs, new metrics were added: What cities have seen the biggest growth in the number of female-led firms in recent years? Where are the most SBA-backed loans going to women, and where are women turning those loans into million-dollar profits?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, New York City and San Francisco –The Alley and The Valley– took the No. 1 and No. 2 spots, respectively.