

# Keen on business

Stories by **PATTY JESSOME**  
Staff Writer

It's amazing what a hundred years will do. Just imagine being a women entrepreneur at the turn of the century: who would have supported your idea, designed a business plan and lent you the capital?

The truth is, despite the passion you might have had; you most likely would have been dismissed.

But the passage of time takes many twists and turns. Fast-forward to Alberta's centennial year and it's obvious that women have entered the millennium with much gusto.

This year during Alberta's Small Business Week, Oct. 24 - 29, the industry will pay tribute to the significant contributions that small business and their entrepreneurial owners make to the economy.

In the mix are more women than ever. Kelly Keen is an Alberta businesswoman who felt the first pangs of entrepreneurship when she was just 10.

"I was in a car accident and I was getting a \$10,000 settlement (at 18)," she says from her home-based business in Edmonton.

"I was obsessed about that money."

A true entrepreneur at a ripe young age, she hounded her investment agent giving him ideas on where to invest her settlement. "He eventually asked me to stop calling him," she laughs.

To fill the void and satisfy her financial savvy she started reading the stock exchange and by age 12 she found wisdom in books authored by financial gurus like Warren Buffett. When she graduated high school she began working for an Edmonton firm, Taylor Financial Group. "By the time I was 20, I was competing with grey hairs."

In 2000 she opened her own financial firm, Keen Financial, and it wasn't long before she was giving lectures and seminars where she taught on the philosophy of money. Her lectures took an in-depth look at how women think and feel about money. They were very successful and she was very much in demand.

"I couldn't do both (the lectures and advising) and



- PATTY JESSOME, Sun photo

**Kelly Keen is an entrepreneur, an author and lecturer who runs her own business, The Prosperity Factor.**

be successful," she realized.

So she merged her firm with her mentor and previous boss at Taylor Financial Group and opened up The Prosperity Factor, wrote a book of the same name; still travels across the country giving lectures and is working on a follow up to her first book, *The Women's Guide to Money*. She's accomplished much in her short life and always knew that she was unique.

"I knew I was different," she says of being an only woman in a man's world.

But it was the passion inside that drove her to succeed and she admits that women are making more leeway in the industry. "Women are making leaps and bounds (in business)."

For more information go to [www.theprosperity-factor.com](http://www.theprosperity-factor.com).

## Women's initiative, AWE, helps

"Women entrepreneurs are growing at a faster rate than ever before," says Alison Gray, executive director of Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE).

And a report released from CIBC World Markets in June sites an impressive growth of 50% among women

trend continues, the number of those businesses will top the one million mark by the end of the decade.

And with initiatives like the AWE, a not-for-profit corporation, supported by Western Economic Diversification (WD), an arm of the federal government, women have

which Gray says is reasonable considering women typically choose areas where large start up loans are not required.

"Women usually go into hospitality, service or retail," she says, explaining that there are few women in manufacturing. "Our average loan

for us to help," says Gray, but admits that they take more risks than a bank would.

### Unique combination

However, the combination of training and loan programs allows those who take advantage of the AWE greater success, says Gray.