

# Women Mean Business Luncheon Raises More Than \$170,000 for First Step

By Rachel Edelman

More than 400 guests gathered at The Pierre Hotel for the 16th annual Women Mean Business Luncheon on April 8, 2010. The luncheon was emceed by Caroline Rhea and featured a keynote address by Arianna Huffington. The luncheon raised more than \$170,000 for First Step, the Coalition's job training program for homeless women, and had the largest number of attendees in the event's history.

Arianna Huffington inspired the audience as she spoke of the economic struggles affecting millions of Americans, and urged guests to get involved in and support programs like First Step. She pronounced, "This is an unprecedented moment in American history, when instead of upward mobility, which is the essence of the American dream, we have downward mobility. I'm convinced that there is no way we'll be able to turn things around unless we all get involved."

The luncheon honored corporate supporter Credit Suisse for their longstanding support and commitment to the program. Jackie Stone and Sophia Wajnert accepted the Corporate Service Award, and spoke of Credit Suisse's efforts to support First Step. Program Director Diana Olaizola shared her experiences as a graduate of the program, and was featured in a video presentation. Guests also had the opportunity to hear from and meet several First Step graduates in attendance.



Arianna Huffington giving the keynote speech



Arianna Huffington and Caroline Rhea



Diana Olaizola, First Step Director and graduate

The Coalition is grateful for the support and generosity of the **First Step Advisory Board, Luncheon Committee, Junior Committee, and sponsors**, who made the luncheon possible:

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