**SUCCESSFUL WORK EXPERIENCE:**

**Michelle DeClerck**, Certified Meeting Planner (CMP), **founded Conference Event Management (CEM) and Financial Speakers Bureau in 2003**, an Iowa woman-owned business enterprise and leading provider of unique, world-class event, conference, incentive travel, meeting experiences, reward strategies, hotel & cruise site selection and contracting, individual Travel MyWay® travel bookings, and national speaker’s circuit bookings.

During 2008-2009 when most small to mid-size event management companies went out of business due to recession and “AIG Effect” perception issues, Michelle’s high ethical standards and vision helped reinvent opportunities for the company, maintaining all staff and without the traditional reduction in pay.

CEM, a Targeted Small Business, is unique in that it has organically grown since its inception without a sales team, based on referrals from satisfied clients who often become best friends with CEM staff and herself. For Michelle, going to work is an opportunity to share her passionate energy among her staff, as well as enjoy client interactions every day. Prior to starting her own company she was instrumental in sales and reward strategies for various Iowa organizations.

**SHARED BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES:**

Michelle has great passion for **women’s initiatives**. She’s been involved with **National Association of Women Business Owners** – Iowa Chapter (NAWBO) for several years and was honored in 2011 as Woman Business Owner of Year. Currently she serves on the board as the Secretary and National Liaison spreading the message of NAWBO to potential new members, and has worked to practice, innovate, and effect change by supporting and advocating for women business owners in Iowa. Her innovative ideas and approach to helping others is evident throughout those she inspires and works with throughout her volunteer efforts.

DeClerck is involved in many other women’s initiatives including serving on the **Steering Committee for Iowa Women Lead Change (IWLC) and supports their annual conference with consulting and logistical services**. As well, Michelle is pleased to be scheduled by **ISED Women’s Business Center**, under the US Small Business administration, to give her presentation on building a sustainable business practice which will help Iowa women business owners as they launch and grow their businesses. **She is frequently asked to speak on women in leadership** and on **women business ownership,** most recently for the business fraternities at Drake and Iowa State. She’s been happy to host college groups in the office for job shadow days to expose students to the events and hospitality industry.

In fall of 2014, Michelle **launched Mentor Tank**, an effort inspired by Iowa’s involvement in Million Women Mentors. Million Women Mentors (MWM) is a national initiative with aims of developing confidence in girls and young women to pursue courses, degrees and careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related fields as well as increasing the representation of women in these fields. **As a frequently requested mentor, and with nearly 12 years of leading an all-women team at her company, DeClerck is committed to advancing women in their pursuit for rewarding career opportunities.** She supports **Million Women Mentors (MWM-IA) by serving on the Executive Council** and representing NAWBO.

Mentor Tank is the first of its kind in Iowa and is a monthly gathering for young women to connect with DeClerck and other professional women to learn about hot topics affecting women in today’s workforce, including the event planning and hospitality industry, career skills, women business ownership, and strategies for fulfilling career and mentoring opportunities. Mentor Tank™ involves women professionals from numerous industries as panelists to speak on their respective fields and will include professionals in STEM positions. Monthly events take place at the CEM office in West Des Moines. Young women (high school seniors through recently graduated college students) looking for career support or opportunities, including those who want to enter the hospitality industry, are invited to attend armed with questions and prepared to share concerns, best practices and suggest topics to cover more in depth. The inaugural Mentor Tank took place on Tuesday, November 11, 2014.

**MORE COMMUNITY OUTREACH STORIES:**

She also serves as **President of the Board for Opportunity on Deck providing year-round free athletic programming to underserved children**. As a working board member, she is often coaching or running registration two times a week during soccer, baseball, and basketball seasons, and spends numerous hours each week helping to promote the executive director and the organization which has been recognized throughout the metro, and including in the House of Representatives. This super successful venture saw over 91 kids participate in soccer this spring and was notable as these children would not have been able to play otherwise. The organization was just notified it would be honored at an upcoming community award banquet for its work with diverse families.

Michelle was instrumental in the kick-off five years ago, and also now serves as the **Co-chair, for Matthew 25** to address hunger and homelessness issues locally and overseas. Michelle’s leadership and never ending vision for vast improvement opportunities is continually evidenced by the new ventures her team tackles.

Michelle has also been a huge supporter and active volunteer for **Valley Showchoir**, co-chairing their staging committee for the past six years, leading a **Girl Scout** troop, guiding her son’s path to **Eagle Scout**, **church opportunities** and more over her children’s school years, running **Clive After Five**, being the longest running **Clive Jaycee** before she aged out, and being active in all her volunteer efforts, never simply a paper member.

**UPCOMING FUTURE SUCCESS STORIES:**

Most recently, **DeClerck founded the Iowa Hospitality Donation Network – a collaborative effort involving Des Moines area hotels, venues, and hospitality partners.** She is spearheading initiatives for these hospitality partners who are working together to collect leftover food, personal care items, and housewares and distribute to charitable organizations to improve the lives and health of low-income and homeless people in the local community. Her belief that recyclable materials should end up with those in need instead of the landfill is heard by those she works with in any capacity.

**CONTACTING MICHELLE:**

Do you have a need to be inspired? Do you know someone who wants to duplicate some of Michelle’s visionary community or business ventures? Do you know of a way to further enhance Michelle’s volunteer groups? Do you want to recommend a great self-help business book to her (which she loves to read)? Michelle always makes time to take calls, especially for young women who believe in equality and eager to find opportunities in her community. Michelle embodies her company’s values of Accountability, Integrity, Creativity, Relationships, Expertise, and Fun and may be available for a speaking opportunity. You can reach her at: Michelle@myCEM.com or [www.mycem.com](http://www.mycem.com).