



Baoku Moses, let my people dance | Scott Beseler

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Hey Hey Bad Girls!

BY: FEOSHIA HENDERSON, 8/24/2010



Cincinnati's first [Bad Girl Ventures Class](#) has been hand-picked and is ready to get down to business. But the name of this group of entrepreneurs is sort of a misnomer. These bad girls really aren't either so don't let them fool you. They're an accomplished group of women ready to set Cincinnati on fire with an innovative brand of start-up financing.

Bad Girl Ventures was launched earlier this year by Over-the-Rhine attorney Candace Klein to help fill the gap between small startups looking for loans, and funders who want to invest in local job creation.

Bad Girl Ventures is based on the [micro-financing model](#) (donations start at \$25) of international organizations like Kiva where small loans from individuals are bundled together. Bad Girls is a registered 501(c)3, housed in the [Over-the-Rhine Chamber Revitalization Corporation](#), so contributions are tax deductible. The



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businesses apply for loans in a competitive application process that will allow them to get their ideas off the ground.



While one of the eight entrepreneurs selected will receive a \$25,000 low interest loan from Bad Girl Ventures, other partner banks will be approached to finance the other participants. Another round of financing will follow every six weeks or so. BGV has partnered with traditional and non-traditional lenders and recently cemented partnerships with Fifth Third Bank and ECDI, a micro-lender out of Columbus that primarily lends SBA dollars.

"5/3rd is interested in partnering with BGV because they're interested in investing in women-owned businesses," Klein said.



Klein believes BGV is the first of its kind in the nation because it pairs the micro-lending model with a curriculum and a focus on women. Eight chosen startups will undergo a six-week entrepreneur curriculum where they will learn the building blocks to starting a business and be responsible for submitting a business plan, WBE application, etc. And while the classes are free for the eight women selected for the loan program, others in the community are welcome to sign up for the classes as well. (You can email Klein at candace@badgirlventures.com for more information).

BGV's first class will be announced tonight, Aug. 24, at 6 p.m. at the Hyde Park Country Club. [Tickets](#) for the reveal and fundraiser are \$25.

"I am very excited about the talent that has come forward for our first BGV class," said Klein. "Of the 68 women who applied to receive our first loan, we feel confident that the eight women who have been invited into our first class represent a variety of skills, backgrounds and diverse business concepts."

The businesses range from fashion to food to tech and everything in between. BGV's youngest participant is in her early twenties, while the most tenured is in her mid-fifties. Some have already run a number of businesses while others are just beginning. BGV gave Soapbox access to its first finalists - just some of the creative business women who are making an impact on the Cincinnati startup world. Here's a preview of three of those finalists.

Stop Traffick Fashion

[Stop Traffick Fashion's](#) Emily Hill brings abolitionism into the 21st Century. She launched the business just over a year ago, selling boutique-style handbags, jewelry and t-shirts made by survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence in Cambodia, Vietnam and Afghanistan. Proceeds from those sales goes toward supporting and empowering those survivors, which gives them a self-sustaining way of making a living. The Walnut Hills resident sells the products through her web site and at local trunk shows.

Hill works in market research analytics at The Nielsen Company and has a Master of Arts in Economics from Miami University. She operates Stop Traffick Fashion herself, and self-finances it. BGV will allow her take her company to the next level, Hill said.

"I feel like I'm at the crossroads now. When I started (Stop Traffick) I just wanted to get it up and running and then take a look at (growing) it later. Taking the classes and getting mentorship from professionals that have experience with startups was appealing. They can help me refine it and plan for the future," Hill said.



Electronic Interiors

Ellen Smith purchased [Electronic Interiors](#) last year and is president and Chief Executive Officer of the company. Though the Hebron resident has extensive management experience with Avon, spending the last 15 years as a District Manager directing 250 sales

personnel, this is the first time she has owned her own business. Smith was also an eight-year employee of Norcom an audio/visual design/integration company, where she worked as a marketing and business manager.



Electronic Interiors is a professional consulting and design firm that develops video, audio, security, and tele-communications systems, in addition to creating sustainable design for new and renovated spaces. In the past year, Smith has earned needed certifications as a Certified Technology Specialist - Design InfoComm International and Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design Accredited Professional and others.

Smith said BGV will allow her to expand her business network and refine her business plans. If she wins the \$25,000, Smith will be able to better market her company as she goes into her second year of ownership.

"I can move on and start introducing myself and my company," Smith said. "Being part of Bad Girl Ventures will help with marketing and lead me in the right direction. I think it's a great opportunity."

Pet Wants: The Urban Feed Market at Findlay Market



Michele Hobbs and Amanda Broughton opened [Pet Wants](#) in June in OTR's Findlay Market. The store offers locally sourced specialty pet foods and products to urban Cincinnati pet owners. The pair, who live in Prospect Hill, also offer a delivery service to shoppers who live within a five-mile radius of [Findlay Market](#) and spend \$15 or more each week on their pets. Hobbs said she and Broughton would like to one day turn their business into an affordable franchise opportunity.

Hobbs was the President of the Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association for 3 years until her term expired in 2009, and has worked in sales. Broughton has a marketing degree from Northern Kentucky University and has worked in retail, the service industry and in small business management.

This is their first business venture together and in addition to financing, the mentorship of BGV will be vital to helping them succeed, Hobbs said.

"We're really looking forward to that feedback. The mentors can look at some of things we are doing and let us know if we need to change direction on anything," she said.

You can check out the other BGV finalists here:

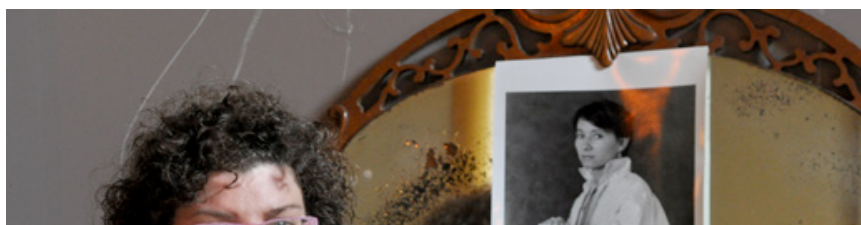
Darcy Vorhees of [Flaming Medusa Studios, Inc.](#)

Nicole Willis of [Party Sitters, LLC.](#)

Caitlin M Wilkerson of [WouldURather LLC.](#)

Heather E Curless of [Greener Stock.](#)

Ellen K Faeth of [Mullane's Parkside Cafe'](#)





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Photography by [Scott Beseler](#).

- Group shot of BGV first class (left-right)
- Amanda Broughton, Michele Hobbs, Candace Klein, Nicole Willis, Darcy Vorhees, Emily Hill, Caitlin M. Wilkerson
- Candace Klein
- Heather E Curless
- Amanda Broughton and Michele Hobbs
- Ellen K Faeth

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