

## Stimulate the Economy? No Problem

By: Eve Gumpel | 04/08/2009

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As an editor, I get an abundance of pitches, news releases and factoids on a daily basis. Some go directly to the delete file. Others get a lukewarm reception. But I also see a plethora of innovative and compelling ideas out there in Entrepreneurland. (PR pros take note. There are ways to catch an editor's eye.)

I've spoken with a lot of women entrepreneurs since I began this job. Each one is admirable, not just because she's living her dream and make a living at it (sometimes a *very good* living), but also because she's out to make the world a better place. Those I've connected with are all philanthropists, dedicated to giving back.

Take, for example, Stacy Brooks and Jennell Lynch. The two longtime friends are doing more than complaining about the current state of the economy--they've created their own small-scale stimulus package, which they're calling [The Right LANES--Ladies Advancing a New Economy](#). On May 30, the pair will be busing 30 women to Charlottesville, Va., on a one-day dining, shopping and networking excursion. "It's all about what we can do to help our local communities and the economy," says Brooks, who estimates that the odyssey will inject about \$6,000 into the Charlottesville economy.



Jennell Lynch, left, and Stacy Brooks have developed their own small-scale economic stimulus plan.

Like most entrepreneurs, Brooks and Lynch jumped in when they recognized an unmet need. Lynch says the initial idea for The Right LANES came from a newspaper story about Charlottesville's struggling shops. Instead of shopping at Target, she thought, why not get a group of women together to shop at a series of boutiques where they could make a significant impact and perhaps help keep those businesses afloat?

Thought quickly translated into action, and The Right LANES became reality. Lynch's husband, a graphic designer, created a website. The women followed up with an e-mail blast to all their contacts, along with letters to the Obama administration and state politicians. "We want them to know that constituents are doing things themselves to help the economy. We want to let people know they can do the same," Lynch says.

The bus is filling up fast, and businesses in Charlottesville are eagerly anticipating the potential influx of customers and cash. They've offered discounts and items for gift bags. A couple of boutiques are even closing their doors for the shoppers to browse their wares, sip champagne and enjoy 30-minute seminars on such topics

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Two individuals, working together, have stirred an air of excitement in Virginia these days. Lynch and Brooks took the initiative because they believe they can make a difference.

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