

# NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **VERIZON LAUNCHES ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM TO HELP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS BECOME SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS**

*Awards \$500,000 in Grants to Provide Business and Entrepreneurship Skills Training for Survivors of Domestic Abuse across New York State*

- Organizations launching entrepreneurship training programs in New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany
- \$100,000 grants awarded to five workforce development organizations statewide
- Expanding the Verizon Domestic Violence Entrepreneurship Program and helping survivors start small businesses to help them become financially independent to break the cycle of violence

**ALBANY, NY** – In 2004, Ebony Fletcher almost lost her life to an abusive ex-boyfriend after he sat on her back and shot her in the head. She survived that ordeal but knew she needed to flee the abuse and start over. For this mother of four, that meant seeking financial independence by pursuing her dream of owning and operating a small business. In 2007, Ebbies Hair & Nail Salon, Inc. opened in Brooklyn.

In 2011, with help from a \$5,000 entrepreneurship grant provided by Verizon Wireless' HopeLine Program, Ebony was able to further grow her business by purchasing new equipment and expanding her line of hair products. Ebony's grant was part of the [Verizon Domestic Violence Entrepreneurship Grant](#) Program, launched in July 2010 to provide funding to domestic violence survivors to help them start or expand a small or home-based business.

After inspirational successes like Ebony Fletcher, [Verizon](#) is expanding its commitment to this program by awarding \$500,000 in grants to help other domestic violence survivors rebuild their lives. The grants will fund the development of training programs to help survivors start or expand their own small or home-based businesses, which can lead to greater financial stability and independence, crucial factors in breaking the cycle of violence.

“These workforce development grants, and the Verizon Domestic Violence Entrepreneurship Grants that preceded them, are a great example of companies working with communities we serve to improve the lives of our friends and neighbors,” said Russ Preite, president of Verizon Wireless’ Upstate New York Region. “It’s gratifying to see the success survivors like Ebony have had and we’re excited to give other survivors across the state the opportunity to write their own success stories as they pursue their entrepreneurial dream and become self-sufficient and financially stable.”

Five workforce development organizations across New York State will be receiving \$100,000 each. The organizations, in partnership with local domestic violence advocacy agencies, are developing programs to educate and mentor survivors to develop a viable business plan for their venture.

The following organizations will receive grants:

- **Albany** – Hudson Valley Community College Workforce Development Institute and Equinox, Inc.
- **Buffalo** – Everywoman Opportunity Center and the Family Justice Center of Erie County
- **New York City** – Sanctuary for Families, Inc.
- **Rochester** – Monroe Community College Workforce Development Office and Alternatives for Battered Women
- **Syracuse** – WISE Women’s Business Center and Southside Innovation Center with Vera House

The groups are currently recruiting participants for their local programs. Each program builds on current program offerings available and aligned with the needs of the local community. Courses include financial literacy, taxes, legal issues, time management, conflict/problem resolution, professional etiquette, and more.

“Small businesses are important drivers of the New York State economy,” said Heather Briccetti, president and CEO of The Business Council of New York State, Inc. “By encouraging and supporting the growth of small businesses, these grants, and the educational programs they support, not only give domestic violence survivors an opportunity to reclaim their financial independence, they can also lead to additional new jobs down the road as these businesses grow and expand.”

“I commend Verizon for moving beyond the individual grant program we developed together, to this more robust programmatic effort that realizes the potential of connecting domestic violence programs and workforce development programs. Many survivors of domestic violence have the ingenuity, determination, and dedication necessary to create a small business, and for those that do, entrepreneurship can offer the freedom and security that they are determined to achieve,” said Amy Barasch, executive director of the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

### **Verizon Domestic Violence Entrepreneurship Program**

Participants who complete one of the five entrepreneurship training programs will be eligible to apply for a Verizon Domestic Violence Entrepreneurship Grant, up to \$5,000. To date, 14 entrepreneurship grants totaling \$57,500 have been awarded across New York State, with more planned in 2012.

- Laurie Cargill of Rochester used her grant to launch a home redesign, home staging, and organizing business. “I began with a business idea that resonated with my passions and provides affordable home decorating solutions in a trying economy, and took a leap of faith,” she said. “Receiving a grant from

Verizon provided start-up funding when I didn't have a penny to invest in my business venture and has been key to helping me rebuild my life!”

- “The Verizon Entrepreneurship Grant was more than helpful to me; it was life-changing and inspiring,” said another grant recipient who wished to remain anonymous. “It gave me the push to become someone I love. I’ve been working non-stop to better my skills and knowledge since I got the grant. I know it’s my future.”

Information on the Verizon Domestic Violence Entrepreneurship Grants is available at <http://aboutus.verizonwireless.com/communityservice/YourArea.html>

For small business news, free resources, tips and exclusive insights from Verizon, read the [Verizon Small Biz Blog](http://www.verizon.com/smallbusinessblog) ([www.verizon.com/smallbusinessblog](http://www.verizon.com/smallbusinessblog)); follow [VZSmallBiz on Twitter](https://twitter.com/VZSmallBiz) ([www.twitter.com/VZSmallBiz](https://twitter.com/VZSmallBiz))

## **About Verizon**

Verizon Communications Inc. (NYSE, Nasdaq: VZ), headquartered in New York, is a global leader in delivering broadband and other wireless and wireline communications services to consumer, business, government and wholesale customers. Verizon Wireless operates America’s most reliable wireless network, with nearly 108 million total connections nationwide. Verizon also provides converged communications, information and entertainment services over America’s most advanced fiber-optic network, and delivers integrated business solutions to customers in more than 150 countries, including all of the Fortune 500. A Dow 30 company with \$111 billion in 2011 revenues, Verizon employs a diverse workforce of nearly 194,000. For more information, visit [www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com).

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## **About Verizon Wireless**

Verizon Wireless operates the nation’s largest 4G LTE network and largest, most reliable 3G network. The company serves nearly 108 million total wireless connections, including 92.2 million retail customers.

Headquartered in Basking Ridge, N.J., with nearly 82,000 employees nationwide, Verizon Wireless is a joint venture of Verizon Communications (NYSE, NASDAQ: VZ) and Vodafone (LSE, NASDAQ: VOD). For more information, visit [www.verizonwireless.com](http://www.verizonwireless.com). To preview and request broadcast-quality video footage and high-resolution stills of Verizon Wireless operations, log on to the Verizon Wireless Multimedia Library at [www.verizonwireless.com/multimedia](http://www.verizonwireless.com/multimedia).

## **About HopeLine**

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Since the national recycling program began in 2001, HopeLine has collected more than 9 million phones nationwide; awarded more than \$14 million in cash grants to prevention and awareness programs nationwide; and donated more than 123,000 HopeLine phones with more than 406 million minutes of airtime to domestic violence victims, survivors and organizations. The program has also disposed of more than 1 million phones in an environmentally sound way and refurbished the remaining units. To learn more about HopeLine from Verizon and to become involved, visit [www.verizonwireless.com/hopeline](http://www.verizonwireless.com/hopeline).