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Annual microfinance celebration will feature Costco cofounder and Salvadoran microentrepreneur

Global Partnerships' Seventh Annual Business of Hope Luncheon is one of world's largest gatherings to support microfinance

Seattle, Wash., - Global Partnerships' annual celebration of microfinance—to be held Tuesday, October 20—will feature two successful entrepreneurs from two different ends of the business spectrum who will speak about the power of microfinance to transform lives. The speakers are Jim Sinegal, Co-founder, President and CEO of Costco; and Dolores Maritza Jiménez de Portillo, a 29-year-old mother of two, microloan recipient and successful storeowner from El Salvador.

Jiménez is leaving her country for the first time to share her success story with attendees at the Seventh Annual Business of Hope Luncheon held by [Global Partnerships](http://GlobalPartnerships.org), a Seattle-based nonprofit that expands opportunity for people living in poverty through microfinance. The Luncheon is expected to draw an audience of more than 1,000 this year.

Though she grew up very poor during the decade-long civil war in El Salvador, Jiménez has been able to rebuild her family's life with the help of microloans from Global Partnerships' microfinance partner organization Apoyo Integral. She's acquired property and a home, started a successful store that sells everyday items such as food and cosmetics, and is able to provide for her family and send her two sons to school, affording them opportunities she never had. Jiménez left school by age 12 to help support her family.

"Maritza's inspirational story is a powerful example of how microfinance can help people break the cycle of poverty for their families," said Chris Megargee, Global Partnerships Director of Community & Corporate Relations and coordinator of the Luncheon.

Jim Sinegal, President and CEO of Costco Wholesale, will give the keynote speech at the event. After 30 years in the retail business, Sinegal co-founded Costco in 1983, which has become a world leader in membership discount warehouses, currently employing more than 145,000 people worldwide. He's been named one of *BusinessWeek's* "Best Managers" and to *Time Magazine's* list of the 100 most influential people (2006).

The Business of Hope Luncheon was started in 2003 to celebrate and gain support for the work of Global Partnerships to support microfinance and other sustainable solutions for people living in poverty in Latin America. A key highlight of the event is that every year donors are able to meet a microfinance borrower, such as Jiménez, who has benefited from their support.

****Note to media:** Please let us know if you'd like to attend the Business of Hope Luncheon, and/or schedule an interview with Maritza Jiménez, who arrives in Seattle on the evening of Saturday, 10/17, and leaves the evening of Tuesday, 10/20. Jim Sinegal will also be available for interviews directly after the Luncheon.

Details about the Luncheon: The Business of Hope Luncheon will be held on Tuesday, October 20, 2009, from 11:30am–1:15pm, at the Westin Hotel Grand Ballroom, 1900 Fifth Ave, Seattle, Washington. Full

information about the event [can be found here](#); and [directions and parking information can be found here](#). For a sneak preview of Maritza's story, [watch this short video](#).

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About Global Partnerships: Global Partnerships (GP) is a 15-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding opportunity for people living in poverty by supporting microfinance and other sustainable solutions in Latin America. GP invests capital and management expertise in 28 high-performing, mission-driven Latin American microfinance institutions, who in turn provide microcredit and social services to more than 850,000 borrowers, focusing on women, the rural poor, and others typically underserved by financial institutions. <http://www.globalpartnerships.org>.

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About microfinance: Microfinance gained popularity in 2006 when Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in lending to the poor in Bangladesh. With a repayment rate of 98 percent, microfinance continues to be one of the most promising strategies for combating global poverty. Loans as little as \$100 can help someone start or expand a business, providing a family with income needed to feed, clothe and educate a family. The mission and the repayment rate have attracted philanthropic and private sector capital from investors who seek both social and financial returns.