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## THE BOTTOM LINE

*Who's doing what in the Bay Area business community*

**Editor's note:** Introducing our latest addition to The Chronicle's Business section, a daily items column from Andrew S. Ross. If you do business in the Bay Area, The Bottom Line is a must-read, Monday through Friday.

small businesses, insists **Gwendolyn Wright**, a former Bank of America executive who runs her own small-business consultancy. Wright says she's found \$1 million for her clients so far this year, mainly from "alternative lenders" in the Bay Area, like San Francisco's **Working Solutions**, San Jose's **Opportunity Fund** and the **East Bay Development Center**.

"I'm thinking positive and being positive. I'm walking on the sunny side of the street," she said to anyone who would listen. "I tell my clients we're recession-proof. We're moving forward."

**Time to move on?** Mervyns just took another shot, this time closer to the head with major job cuts at its Hayward corporate headquarters. Beyond the word "sig-

► **BOTTOM LINE:** Page C2

**Thinking positive:** "We will survive." With apologies to Gloria Gaynor, that was the prevailing sentiment among attendees at Tuesday night's **S.F. Neighborhood Business Awards** party. Forget the dropping Dow or the presidential debate taking place at the same time, these people, many of them dressed to the nines, came to celebrate and to keep the faith.

"We're feeling the pain, but we're here

**ANDREW S. ROSS**

to stay," said one of the winners, **Netsanet Alemayeho**, who with her sister **Israel** owns the 100-seat **Sheba Piano Lounge** in the Fillmore district.

The awards, presented by **Urban Solutions**, a San Francisco nonprofit that assists small businesses to find financing, also honored **Mission Pie** and **Sun Rise Restaurant** (both in the Mission), **Uoki K. Sakai Co.**, the 102-year-old grocery in Japantown, and SoMa's **Keetsa Mattress** — Urban Solutions' first "green" award.

The winners didn't underplay the toughness of the times. Alemayeho, whose Sheba Piano Lounge specializes in Ethiopian cuisine, said the cost of basic ingredients, like oil and flour, has doubled or more. At the same time, her patrons are spending less. How about raising her prices? "We can't. It would hurt the business too much."

Despite the global evaporation of credit, there is still money to be found for



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