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CONNECTING WOMEN IN COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND THE ARTS

Assemblywoman Experiences Anew America

— By Julia Dodge

ALTHOUGH IT WAS DELICIOUS, THERE WAS MUCH MORE TO the day than Cecilia's homemade salsa. Assemblywoman Loni Hancock got the full tour of Anew America January 12, experiencing the vision of the nonprofit organization and getting the chance to meet some of its successful micro-entrepreneurs.

Led by Anew America's CEO Sylvia Rosales-Fike, Hancock toured the University Avenue office, meeting the staff and viewing an eight-minute film on the organization's advocacy of the empowerment of immigrant communities.

"They say Americans like freedom and independence — now I feel independent," says one client in the film.

Hancock also got a chance to visit the Mesoamerica Institute, a program that teaches English-speakers Spanish and Portuguese, and the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, where she got to sample the finished products of Anew America's success stories, including Chaska's handmade Peruvian clothing and accessories and Cecilia's homemade Mexican food.

"They have a role in society — building a better country," says Rosales-Fike of the

clients. "They're participants now."

Since 2000, Anew America has served 2,987 individuals — at least 70 percent of whom are women.

Among issues discussed were utilizing organically and

immigrant-grown produce and acquiring state funds to expand the program.

Hancock especially enjoyed the organization's promotion of socially-responsible businesses. "If we're launching people into a global business climate, to have businesses feel socially responsible to the environment is crucial," she said.

"This is such a great concept. We could do this for more people." ☆



Sylvia Rosales-Fike (right), CEO of Anew America, takes Assemblywoman Loni Hancock on a tour of the Mesoamerica Institute, an organization started by one of the program's graduates.