

# Women in business

## 2005

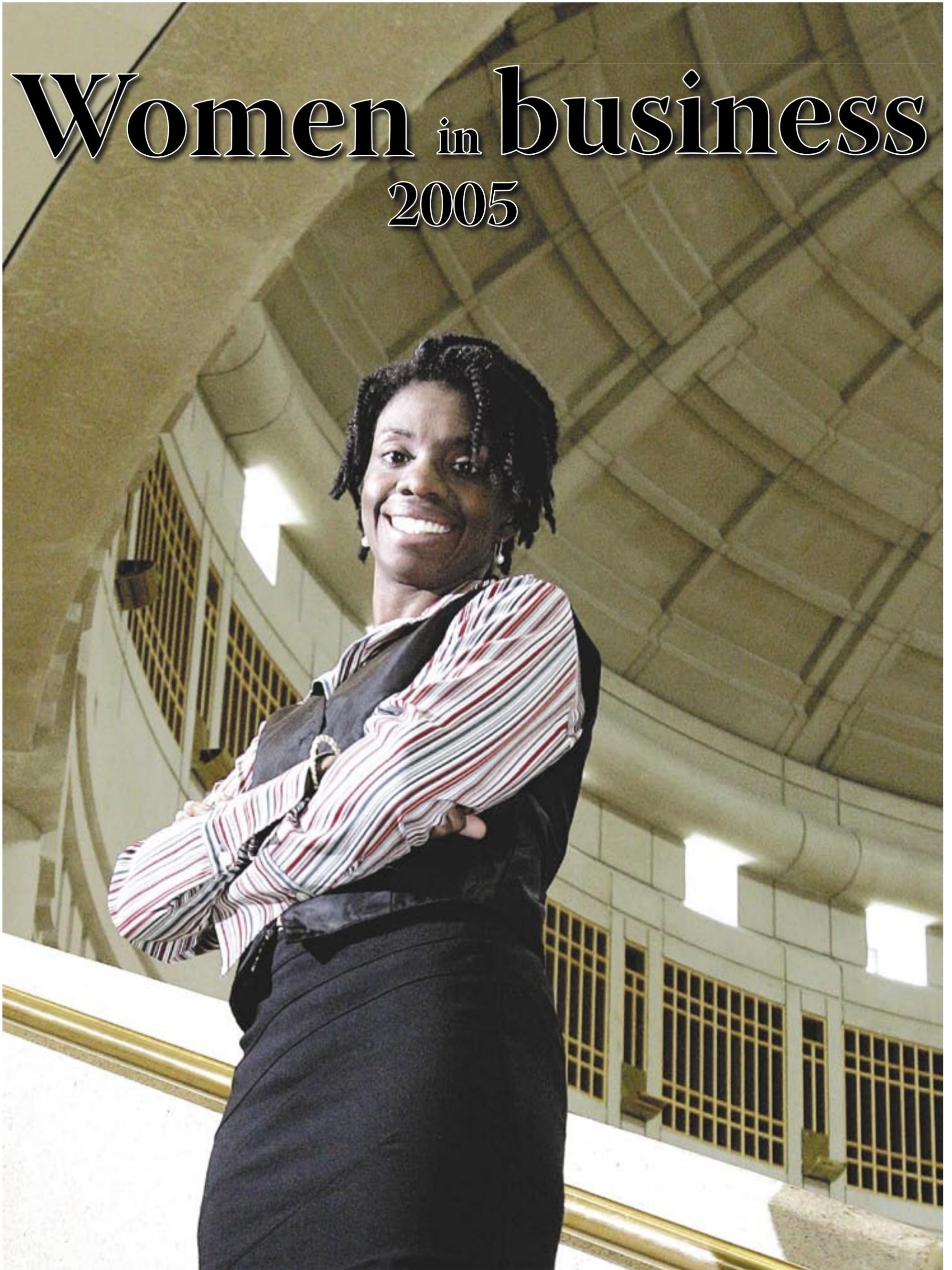




Photo by Patrick Kelley/Aurora Sentinel &amp; Daily Sun

**Always moving:** ZoZo Marketing Group owner LaSheita Sayer poses Oct. 11 in the Aurora Municipal Building. Sayer keeps busy by tripling as a mother, business owner and college student. She says she's lucky to get four hours of sleep a night.

# There's no time for sleeping

*ZoZo owner  
balances business,  
kid and college*

By Michael BeDan

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A lot of people are busy — busy working, busy raising kids, busy with college, busy taking care of someone. Whatever.

People get busy.  
LaSheita Sayer stays busy.  
Always.

The single mother/business owner/college student is lucky to sleep four hours a night.

The 32-year-old Aurora resident has a 4-year-old daughter, Kytiana.

She owns ZoZo Marketing Group, a legal marketing company, which means she helps law firms attract clients. She's finishing her bachelor's degree at the University of Colorado at Denver — only two semesters to go for an international business degree.

And up until last year, Sayer was taking care of her mother, Clara, who died of lung cancer after a three-year battle.

"She was a little, bitty, petite lady who lived off cigarettes — cigarettes, coffee and popcorn, the three staples of my mom's diet," Sayer said of Clara, who left accounting to become a certified 18-wheel cross-country truck driver once LaSheita and her brother, Alex, were grown.

"When my brother and I were on our own,

she said, 'You know what? I'm done being a mom now, and now I get to do what I want,'" Sayer said.

Sayer's road to owning and operating her own business began in junior high when she was in her school's marching band.

"We needed to raise money to go on tour every year," Sayer said. "I was looking for ways to raise money, and selling candy bars, doing car washes, that was always good, but I thought there had to be a better way."

While eating at a local restaurant in California, where Sayer grew up, she noticed products being advertised in the restaurant.

"I asked the waitress, 'What do the Olympics have to do with Denny's?'" she said. "There were all these labels. She's like, 'Well, it's just co-branding.' I told my mom, 'That's what I want to do when I grow up. I want to help companies go together so they can all do marketing together.'"

Sayer has worked fulltime since graduating high school, which accounts for the long college career. She received an associate's degree from Deanza College and attended San Jose State before moving to Colorado to take care of her mother, which coincided with several difficult events. She spent many years taking a class here, a class there.

"I woke up on Sept. 11 to all the tragedy and panic," she remembers. "The next day, I got laid off from my job. I was like, great, I was really tired anyway, now I got laid off, perfect. Two days later, my mom called and says she has lung cancer, they don't know how long she's going to live.

"Here I am, a 3-month-old daughter, no job, and my mom's dying. I thought, 'I don't really know what else could go wrong.' Then

I couldn't get a flight because of Sept. 11."

Sayer's career path took her through several disciplines. Out of high school, she worked for a law firm as a "runner."

"I was paid to ride the elevator, delivering photo copy jobs," she said.

Sayer noticed the receptionists on every floor and decided it was a job she could do.

"All they did was sit there and read the paper and do their nails," she said. "They were paid to sit there and be beautiful all day. They were greeting guests."

She applied for a receptionist job and was told she didn't have the experience. Later, she was a receptionist at another company — Milan Technology — but she wound up being promoted quickly.

"They moved me over to accounting," she said. "Then, I got moved over to marketing. That was my first marketing position in the high tech industry, I've been doing it ever since."

The marketing part, anyway. She's traded marketing high tech products for marketing law firms.

In between, she's marketed other things. Sayer needed money when she moved to Aurora to take care of her mother, so she marketed herself as a paralegal.

After her mother died, she returned to school and ZoZo sort of just happened.

"Some of the clients I had as a contract paralegal, I later contacted them to see if I could help them out," she said.

She told her first client she would build a website for free.

"May I please build your site?" she said. "They really liked it, and it generated a lot of business for them."

ZoZo, she said, is the perfect name.

"I got the name maybe four years ago," she said. "Zo is the name of a member of an African tribe, considered to be kind of all-knowing. They have a lot of knowledge. They are thought to be the advisers of the tribe. They are not the leaders. They are contributing information so the best decisions will be made. I thought it was a fairly accurate description of the role I was trying to get into."

Sayer and Kytiana live in a two-bedroom condo in Aurora, which doubles as ZoZo's headquarters. In January, Sayer and Kytiana will spend five months in France while Sayer studies

abroad.

When she finishes college, Sayer says she could see ZoZo growing into a much bigger business.

"I don't think ZoZo is going to grow while I'm gone," she said. "I will be able to maintain it, though."

**"Here I am, a 3-month-old daughter, no job, and my mom's dying. ... 'I didn't know what else could go wrong.'"**

LaSheita Sayer  
ZoZo Marketing Group