

Illawarra Mercury 11th March 2011

# Entrepreneur taking care of e-business

By GREG ELLIS

WHEN Camtu Pham arrived in Australia from Vietnam in 1984, she could not speak a word of English.

Almost two decades later, she is an author, teacher, motivational speaker, university lecturer and entrepreneur.

During the past eight months, the Corrimal mother-of-two has helped more than 300 businesses in the Illawarra and South Coast overcome the obstacles of conducting business on the internet.

Mrs Pham says she is well on the way to providing free e-business training to 700 small to medium-sized companies in south-east NSW by mid-year.

At the recent Small Business Expo at Wollongong Golf Club, Mrs Pham showed examples of how the training program, called CleverLink Connect 700 in 70 e-Business, had helped existing and start-up companies evolve and progress.

The Federal Government-funded initiative launched in June last year under the Small Business Online Program has attracted strong interest in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.

In her expo presentation - 10 ideas to attract more clients and five ways to get more referrals using the internet - Mrs Pham listed some of the tools the course participants were given to help their businesses thrive.

The free training program is only part of Mrs Pham's impressive involvement in the business community.

After completing a computing science degree in 1993, followed by a master of commerce, she founded the web development and graphic design company CleverLink.

Within five years, it was ranked among the top 50 IT companies in Australia.

Within seven years, she was named Sydney Business Woman of the Year.

CleverLink is now 12 years old and is at the forefront of helping businesses of all sizes establish and maintain an e-business presence.

The company advises how to



**Quite a journey:** Corrimal e-business expert Camtu Pham, who runs her own company CleverLink, has come a long way since arriving in Australia in the mid-1980s. Picture: GREG ELLIS

develop online operations, automate business processes, accept payments online and convert ideas into successful business models.

Mrs Pham is also an experienced lecturer and helped the University of Wollongong to develop its e-commerce curriculum.

The born entrepreneur got her start selling pineapples to classmates as a 12-year-old schoolgirl in Vietnam.

She later expanded the fledgling business by stocking lollies and sweet potatoes.

The seventh of eight children, she was born Camtu Nguyen in the Vietnamese highland city of Dalat, but the family was forced to flee south at the end of the Vietnam War.

In 1978, two of her brothers and one sister left Vietnam, settled in Wollongong and opened Kim's, the city's first Vietnamese restaurant. The rest of the family joined them in 1984.

Mrs Pham often talks about the challenges she faced when she first arrived in Australia as



**Fond memories:** Camtu Pham (front row, third from right) in a school choir in Vietnam before she migrated to Australia.

a teenager. She recalls living on a diet of pies at high school because it was the only word the ladies in the canteen could understand her say.

But through persistence, a positive attitude and motivation to succeed, she went on to achieve her goals, even writing the motivational book *Aim High Fly Fast*.

It has now been published in three languages.

Mrs Pham is an advisory board member of the Catholic Development Fund, a director of WEA Illawarra and recently became president of the Corrimal Chamber of Commerce.

For more details on her free e-business training program, visit [www.cleverlink.com.au](http://www.cleverlink.com.au).