

WEBSITE REVIEW

WEBSITE: KIVA
WWW.KIVA.ORG

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Entrepreneurs are the cornerstone to any thriving economy. In many poor countries around the world there are budding entrepreneurs that need capital, encouragement, and guidance in order to start a successful business. There are also many people who want to help eradicate poverty or at a minimum help meet the physical needs of the poor. Matt Flannery and Jessica Jackley are two entrepreneurs who found a solution to both problems and the answer is www.kiva.org, a company they started in 2005.

Kiva is the first ever person-to-person online micro-lending organization that focuses on connecting individual lenders to potential entrepreneurs. Kiva's mission is "to connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty." Kiva's goal is "to reduce poverty in developing countries by giving entrepreneurs the ability to build their business through flex-

ible loans with six- to twelve-month terms." The loans are provided by individual investors around the world.

The Kiva.org site is very user friendly. There are five main tabs when you enter the site: Lend, About, Community, Journals, & My Portfolio. When you click on "Lend" you will find a list of entrepreneurs and the specifics about why they need a loan. You are able to search for entrepreneurs by location, gender, industry, and other specific criteria. The "About" section explains how Kiva started and gives great detail on the micro-lending industry, how Kiva works, corporate sponsors, press releases, and more. The "Community" tab allows lenders to team together based on certain causes or interests. The "Journals" tab is a place to read more in depth about various entrepreneurs from lenders who have been in direct contact with individuals.

Finally, the “My Portfolio” tab is password protected and a place where each individual lender can keep track of the status of their loans and repayment schedules.

Jessica Jackley, Kiva co-founder, spoke at the Willow Creek Leadership 2009 Conference and a link to more information about Jessica, and to see video clips about Kiva, can be found at <http://www.willowcreek.com/events/leadership/2009/jessica-jackley.asp>. The video clips are short, but do a great job of explaining the Kiva concept. They are strong resources to use as classroom supplements.

Many people feel overwhelmed with the

challenges in our world and are unsure how to help and more often are disillusioned as to whether they can make a difference. Kiva gives entrepreneurs hope and the resources they need while allowing lenders the ability to serve others and to take part in helping to solve global issues in a small way. I highly recommend the kiva.org site as a way to help students learn about the basics of entrepreneurship, to experience social entrepreneurship, get exposure to the global issue of poverty, and have an opportunity to make a personal difference in someone’s life.