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## **American Entrepreneurs Get Help from a Popular International Charity**

[Kiva.org](http://Kiva.org) has been enormously successful matching entrepreneurs in developing countries with people who want to loan them money. Visitors to the Web site have made loans totaling more than \$75-million in less than four years.

Now the San Francisco charity is testing the idea of including U.S. entrepreneurs.

“Most people think of microfinance as something that helps people in the developing world alone, but the impact of microfinance can be felt in any community that supports creative, industrious entrepreneurs,” Premal Shah, Kiva’s president, said in a written statement.

Starting today, Kiva is featuring clients from Accion USA, a national organization that provides business loans to people who would not qualify for traditional bank loans, and Opportunity Fund, a community development financial institution that makes small-business loans in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Among the first American businesses to which visitors to the site can make loans: Mandy’s Korner, a mobile hot-dog stand in San Jose, Calif.; a hair salon in Queens, N.Y., run by a single mother of four; and a board-game store in San Francisco started by a veteran of the Iraq war and his childhood friend.

Several of the loans, which range in size from \$500 to \$10,000, were fully financed within hours of being posted to the site, including a \$10,000 loan for Island You a Hand, a business in Burlingame, Calif., that provides home health-care assistants who speak a variety of languages.

People who make loans through Kiva are motivated to make the world a better place and will still support entrepreneurs overseas, says Eric Weaver, chief executive of Opportunity Fund, in San Jose, Calif. But he thinks the ability to invest in local small businesses will resonate as well, particularly during tough times.

“This is a way to stimulate the economy and get the money repaid,” he says. “So instead of buying a television, go make a Kiva loan.”

— [Nicole.Wallace](#)

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