

The Face Of Small Business In America

(NAPSA)—Years ago, mom-and-pop stores dominated the retail landscape. In many respects they still do; they just look different. Today, many entrepreneurs, including those looking to start a family business, often turn to a franchise concept.

According to research conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the International Franchise Association (IFA), there are currently more than 760,000 U.S. franchised small businesses, which create jobs for more than 18 million people. Franchising now spans 75 different industries and generates in excess of \$1.5 trillion in U.S. economic output.

Such diversity has opened the field so much that there's virtually something for everyone. If you're looking to start a small business, chances are there's a franchised version of it out there somewhere.

"Franchising is a direct by-product of the American entrepreneurial spirit," says IFA President Matthew Shay. "The concept was developed by successful entrepreneurs looking to expand their businesses rapidly. Today, the franchise phenomenon has gone global and attracts a broad range of individuals."

Stuart Mathis, president of Mail Boxes Etc., Inc., the UPS subsidiary company that franchises The UPS Store, echoes Shay's comments. "From young people in their twenties looking to make a name for themselves, to military personnel transitioning to civilian life, to people leaving corporate careers to start a business, we see amazing diversity among our franchisees," he says.

One of those budding entrepreneurs is Melissa Cocks, who "inherited" the entrepreneurial spirit from her father and grandfather, both of whom were small-



business owners. After learning the business as an employee, she bought her first The UPS Store location at age 22. Two years later, she purchased her second center.

"I thought about opening a coffee stand or pizza place, but scouting locations around town, I could see what was needed and where. The UPS Store seemed right for me," she says.

Further along the spectrum are Nicole and Steve Byrne, who saw franchising as an opportunity to explore a new career path and leave a family legacy. The Byrnes recently opened a location inside the Flamingo Las Vegas hotel. "We were looking to start a family business and were thrilled about the unique opportunity offered through a nontraditional location," says Steve.

The IFA's Shay says military veterans are catching the entrepreneurial spirit as well. Since the organization implemented its Vet-Fran program, nearly 300 veterans have signed on for a "tour of duty" with one of more than 140 participating franchise organizations. The UPS Store has been among the most successful, "enlisting" more than 70 new franchisees through the program.

So, even though the name on the storefront might be a highly recognized brand, the person behind the counter is likely to be a small-business owner who is helping to maintain a long tradition of entrepreneurship in America.