

Kids take the Fun Bus on a direct route to playful exercise

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By Erica Lamberg, Correspondent

Fun Bus "Fitness Fun on Wheels" is the brainchild of mother-and-daughter team Dawn McGarry and Kari Denton. McGarry has years of professional business experience and Denton is a certified teacher. Two years ago, the pair started Fun Bus because they realized it was a unique concept, and, as former day care center operators, they enjoyed working with children.

The Fun Bus is a full-sized school bus which has had its seats removed and walls and floor carpeted and padded, to allow for fitness instruction and fun.

The concept of the Fun Bus has caught on with area day care centers, churches and synagogues.

"We go to 15 day care centers and schools each week, with five in Hunterdon and Somerset County," explained Denton. "We've actually had to turn business in these counties away because we are so busy."

Each session on the Fun Bus is 30 minutes, while the bus is parked in the parking lot of the school or center. The bus always remains parked and is never moving when children are on board.

In response to the growing demand to fill requests to bring the Fun Bus to other day care facilities and community and special events Denton and McGarry purchased a second Fun Bus in May 2002.



The owners stress their philosophy of facilitating a hands-on, non-competitive and entertaining approach to fitness.

"It's like an obstacle course inside," said Denton. "Children aren't waiting around while other kids are doing the activities. There's constant movement going on."

The program on the Fun Bus is designed for children ages 2 to 7. Age-appropriate music plays in the background while the children participate in activities such as tumbling on mats, trampolines, slides, balance beams and tunnels.

"The children are always being supervised by the owner and operator of the business," said Denton. "It's always me or my mother on the bus, with one female assistant."

The Fun Bus is also available for birthday parties at a cost of \$200 per hour, with no limit on the number of children who participate. The bus will park in the driveway or in front of a home.

"We do about five parties a weekend and we get at least five or six referrals from every party," said Denton. "The kids tell us it's the best party they have been to and they don't want to get off the bus."

"The Fun Bus is fun," said Victoria Trautman, 4 1/2, of Neshanic Station section of Branchburg. "I get to jump and run around a lot."



Denton and McGarry have made the decision to franchise their business. The franchise includes a protected territory, training needed to set up a Fun Bus and instruction on how to maintain service quality.

Denton believes that the flexibility this career affords is ideal for former teachers, at-home mothers or retirees who want to supplement a family income.

"It's really a turn key operation," Denton said. "The Fun Bus is a great concept, with a great reputation."