

Fun Bus sells first franchises

Published in the Home News Tribune 7/02/03

By KEN TARBOUS
BUSINESS WRITER

WOODBIDGE: Fun Bus USA, a Fords-based provider of fitness sessions and party services for children, has sold its first two franchises, Kari Denton, one of the company's co-founders, said yesterday.

The franchisees have "secure territories . . . broken down demographically by the mileage and (the number of day-care centers)" where they can market and sell their children's programs, Denton said.

The franchisees' territories, two of the 22 available in the state, cover parts of Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties, and Western Monmouth County and Jackson in Ocean County respectively.

"I experienced it firsthand because my daughter went on it. She goes on it every week at her school," said Mia Buckley, 33, of Middlesex Borough, the new franchisee for the Middlesex/Somerset/Union counties territory.

Buckley, who recently left her position at Merrill Lynch in Princeton, will run the franchise with husband, Paul, 31, who is a banker, and her husband's sister, Barbara Buckley, who works in retail and lives on Long Island in New York.

"It's part time, and it's going to offer a lot more flexibility in our life," Buckley said of her motivation to join the Fun Bus team.

The Buckleys' territory includes Franklin Park, Highland Park, Middlesex Borough, New Brunswick, Piscataway and Dunellen in Middlesex County, and Somerset in Somerset County.

The franchise fee is \$25,000, Denton says, and the start-up costs range from \$48,000 to \$78,000.

The programs are targeted to children ages 2 to 7. A Fun Bus is a used 30-foot yellow school bus painted lime green outside and gutted inside, with the floor and sides up to the windows covered with carpet and stocked with fitness equipment.

Schools, day-care centers, and churches, as well as private birthday parties and special events are the core of the Fun Bus business.

The parent corporation was started by Denton, 28, a former teacher, and her mother Dawn McGarry, 52, a former loan officer for Chase Manhattan in Woodbridge, in 2000. The mother-daughter team began working exclusively on the business in June 2001.