

A “CLASSY” BUSINESS

By GARY PULEO - Times Herald Staff

UPPER MERION, If you're a budget-conscious parent who thinks your kids' education is no place to cut corners, you're not alone.

Enrollment at Goddard Schools has continually been on the rise, a fact that convinced parent company Goddard Systems Inc. to open its 300th franchise school recently.

“Child care is one of the last things that anybody wants to sacrifice, so parents will often find other ways to economize so that their child can have the kind of high quality child care that they want to give them,” noted Joe Schumacher, COO of Goddard Systems, which is based in King of Prussia.

Goddard Systems plans to open 50 new schools every year for the foreseeable future.

Schumacher points to several reasons for the success of the company, founded by his late brother-in-law, franchising legend Anthony Martino, who also launched Aamco Transmissions Inc. and Maaco Auto Painting & Bodyworks Inc.

“Parents obviously have to work, and in a down economy, even more even more go back to work. This trend actually increases the number of families who need quality childcare.

“Our schools average almost 90 percent enrollment, the highest in our history, and one of the strongest in the industry. We know that parents sacrifice other things to keep their children in an environment where they are safe, happy, learning and thriving.”

When it comes to opening new schools, Schumacher stated that Goddard typically attracts motivated people.

“Our employees are really top-shelf people who are really dedicated to the industry. They're childcare experts, curriculum experts, quality assurance experts.

“Our franchise operation is really aimed at delivering the best child care and education that we can,” he added, “and I think that attracts people that are interested in those goals.”

The 300th Goddard School recently opened in Centennial, Colo. A dozen are already centered around Denver in that state, Schumacher said. “It's an affluent region and the folks tend to be education oriented, so they're looking for high quality child care, but that's not unusual. In Columbus, Ohio, we probably have 14; in Chicago a dozen or more.

“Our traditional model is based on affluent suburbs surrounding a city. So depending on the size of the city, we'll generally ring a city with Goddard schools.”

More than 30 Goddard schools are located in Pennsylvania, with facilities in Blue Bell, East Norriton, King of Prussia and Collegeville.

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