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Day-care franchisor has sights set on Twin Cities expansion

BY KATHARINE GRAYSON
STAFF WRITER

Goddard Systems Inc., a franchisor of early-childhood care and education centers, is pushing to expand its presence in the Twin Cities, with plans to add up to seven locations.

The King of Prussia, Pa.-based company now has three local franchises, in Chanhassen, Brooklyn Park and Plymouth. It's working with existing franchisees to open two additional schools in 2011. Company officials hope to ultimately have 10 Twin Cities locations.

Goddard, which operates under the name Goddard Schools, provides all-day and after-school care to children, including infants. Tuition ranges from \$900 to \$1,100 per month.

The company entered the area in 2005. CEO Joseph Schumacher said the market's income and education levels made it a good fit.

Eagan, Oakdale, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Woodbury could support franchises, said Jeff



PROVIDED BY GODDARD SYSTEMS INC.

Goddard's franchises are usually standalone sites, 8,400 square feet in size.

Travitz, director of franchise sales. Goddard has about 362 franchises nationwide.

It costs about \$700,000 for a franchisee to get a school up and running; buying property can add another \$2 million or so. The company

scouts for sites near landmarks; schools average 8,400 square feet in size.

Goddard Systems has several local competitors, including Plymouth-based New Horizon Academy, which has more than 50 loca-

GODDARD SYSTEMS INC.

City: **King of Prussia, Pa.**

CEO: **Joseph Schumacher**

Business: **Early childhood education franchises**

Corporate employees: **115**

Web: **goddardschool.com**

tions in Minnesota, and Portland, Ore.-based Knowledge Learning Corp., which operates under the brand name KinderCare.

Day care centers have been hit by the recession; average vacancy rates hover around 25 to 30 percent, said Sandy Myers, director of programs and public policy for Little Canada-based Resources for Child Caring.

Vacancy at Goddard Schools is a bit lower: In Plymouth, vacancy is 18 percent, versus 29 percent average for that city, Myers said.

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