

franchise

If you have a heart for helping and a brain for business, the franchise world has a lot to offer

Taking care

**[FRANCHISEE SPOTLIGHT]
FRAN LUBBS,
GODDARD SYSTEMS**

Fran Lubbs accomplished a lot in the six years she worked for educational child-care franchisor Goddard Systems. She worked in quality assurance and curriculum development, and eventually moved into franchisee training. But a brush with illness caused her to reevaluate her career. After bat-

ting first ovarian and then breast cancer, Lubbs set her sights on a whole new goal: becoming a Goddard franchisee herself.

In 2001, she bought one of Goddard's company-owned schools in Strafford, Penn.—a historic mansion converted to a day-care center that happened to be just a couple of

miles from her home—and she hasn't looked back since. We asked her to share some insights about her journey from corporate employee to franchise owner. —TRACY STAPP

How did you first join up with Goddard?
I went to work for Goddard when I moved to Pennsylvania from Illinois in 1995. I had a background in early childhood education, and their philosophy was very much aligned with mine. I believe that children learn best by doing; they learn best through play.

What made you want to become a franchisee?
I sat down and looked at my life, as many people do when faced with a medical challenge. And although I loved my job, I wanted more time for my family. And I wanted to get back into a school. There is something about being in a school with young children that gives you such an optimism and such a focus on the future. You can watch an infant take their first steps in a classroom, and then four years later watch that same child read their first word. It's a phenomenal inspiration.

Did you have any doubts about becoming a business owner?
My father had his own business, and my siblings and I always used to joke that we learned alphabetical and numerical order by sorting invoices on the dining room table. So the idea of owning a business wasn't foreign to me. And I had experience with running child-care centers before I came to work for Goddard—running both the business side and the education side. That's one of the reasons I think Goddard's model works so well. It doesn't all fall on one person's shoulders. I run the business side of the school, and I have an education director to focus on the lesson plans and teaching.

Has owning a business given you more time for your family as you hoped?
When you start a business, you put your heart and soul into it. In the beginning, it was seven days a week, long hours. I'm still here almost every day—including the weekends. That's really a selling point in the community, because they drive by and see my husband and me changing light bulbs, cleaning the fence and playground equipment—things that can't be done when the children are here. At the same time, being a business owner instead of an employee does give me flexibility to take time to see my daughter in a play or to attend a graduation ceremony.

