

Area art-instruction firm rolls out aggressive franchising plan

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by [Tamarind Phinisee](#)



Shell Herman, founder and CEO of KidzArt LLC, has developed a network of 64 franchises in 27 states since launching the company in 2002.

The owners of a New Braunfels-based art instruction and enrichment company called **KidzArt LLC** say they want to expand their franchise chain in Texas as well as take their concept around the world.

During the past year and a half, CEO, founder and director Shell Herman says KidzArt has opened 27 new franchises in 15 states.

Some of these franchises were opened in Georgia, California, New Jersey and Tennessee.

The company has seen explosive growth in Florida and New Jersey, where it has six franchises in each state.

Now, Herman says she and business partner, president and co-founder Chris Cruikshank would like to add to the firm's franchise muscle by increasing its presence in the Lone Star State in cities such as San Antonio, San Marcos and Austin.

Specifically, Herman says she would like to open two franchise locations in San Antonio as soon as possible and is looking for individuals who know the city well and who are up for the commitment.

"I think San Antonio has got such a diverse population (that) ... you really need someone that knows what they're doing," she says.

Having locations in these areas, she says, would be ideal because of their close proximity to the KidzArt corporate headquarters.

In addition to Texas cities, Herman says the company also looks to expand its reach in Midwest cities such as Indianapolis, St. Paul and Minneapolis.

"We're definitely looking to expand, and we're looking for some pretty good people who are connected in the community," Herman says. "We want people who are comfortable spending the hours it takes to get the business going and in putting the (necessary) funds into it. It's a big commitment."

Herman adds that she would prefer people who are in the corporate world and who are looking to make a change.

Initial start-up capital required is anywhere from \$52,000 to \$75,000, this includes the franchise fee of \$31,900. And franchisees will also need living expenses for at least a year.

Broad stroke

In addition to more domestic growth, Herman says the company would also like to open multiple franchises internationally within the next four years and hopes to find 30 to 40 franchisees to help it reach this goal. It currently does not have any overseas locations.

"We're starting to talk to folks from different countries who are very interested in the (KidzArt) concept," she says, adding that the company would like to have locations in the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Qatar, Australia, Turkey, Istanbul and possibly Greece within the next four years.

Currently, KidzArt has 64 franchises. Herman says the company's goal is to increase that number to 150 domestically within the next four years.

KidzArt was launched in 2002 and operates franchises in 27 states.

The company now has annual revenue in the \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million range, Herman says. KidzArt has a total of 7 employees, including the two owners -- apart from its franchise locations.

The number of staff at any given franchise location depends on how large the franchisee wants the business to be as well as the level of interest and participation in the area. Staff size can range anywhere from 3 to 35 persons.

KidzArt does not operate any company-owned nonfranchise locations.

The company's art programs primarily target children ages 6 to 12. The company offers drawing-based visual arts programs that teach easy-to-learn drawing techniques and introduce children to contemporary and fine art.

In addition, KidzArt offers art programs for pre-schoolers (ages 2 to 5) and middle school students.

Art smart

Rebecca Wustrau, a KidzArt franchisee in Austin since 2003, says she has been successful in growing her business despite the city's competitive art environment.

Austin, she says, is home to a couple of key art schools: The Art School of the Austin Museum of Art-Laguna Gloria and the **Dougherty Arts Center**.

"I have a tremendous amount of competition. So it's more challenging for me," Wustrau says. "But I believe the quality of our materials, the quality of our programs, which focus on art education, versus arts and crafts, ... is what sets us apart."

The idea behind the art programs, Herman says, is to supplement art instruction students may or may not be receiving in school.

"Art builds confidence and the ability to draw and create works of art. Students aren't getting it to the extent that they really need it," Herman says, adding that often art is one of the first programs to be cut in a budgeting crisis. "Our goal is to take the fear out of art and let them know that everybody is an artist."

KidzArt programs can be paid for by parents, school districts or parent/teacher associations (PTAs) and are typically offered as after-school programs at schools or other public facilities like area YMCAs as well as community and recreation centers.

Of course, children aren't the only ones who can benefit from KidzArt.

The organization also offers its Art Innovators for adults and its SeniorzArt: ReDiscover! program for senior citizens in assisted living centers.

Herman says KidzArt is developing a corporate program that it hopes to bring to companies to help teach creativity, problem solving and team building in the workplace.

As a way to add to the franchisees' revenue stream, Herman says KidzArt also looks to partner with companies to offer additional products to parents.

"We are also looking to license and have strategic partnerships with companies who will add products and services that will complement our own," Herman says. "It has to be directly related to what we do and be something that's really going to add a lot of value."

KidzArt

Business: A provider of drawing-based visual arts programs that teach easy-to-learn drawing techniques and introduce children to contemporary and fine art.

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