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BUSINESS

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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



CANDACE WEST/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

ADD IT UP: Kirsten Fisch is the founder of Math Monkey, a Weston-based firm.

IF YOU GO

- **What:** Franchise Expo South
- **When:** Today-Sunday
- **Where:** Miami Beach Convention Center
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m., today and Saturday; 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday
- **Cost:** One-day pass: \$20
- **More information:** www.franchiseexposouth.com

THE FRANCHISE EXPO SOUTH MATCHES FRANCHISES WITH INVESTORS

BY JIM WYSS
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If you've ever dreamed of feasting on a buffet of business ideas, you may want to visit the Miami Beach Convention center over the next three days. Inside, more than 140 franchises — from fast food to hot-wax hair-removal outfits — will be trying to catch the eye of hungry investors.

Adam Ogden is hoping he can reel in some of the 10,000 visitors expected at the event, Franchise Expo South, using free smoothies as bait. The 30-year-old is the owner of Juiceblendz, a Weston-based company that makes high-end mixes of fruit juices.

With outlets in Boca Raton, Weston and Suniland Plaza in Pinecrest — and another 17 under development — Ogden said he decided to attend the event — the company's first trade show — to scout out buyers who might help him reach his goal of opening 50 outlets by 2009.

"One of our biggest challenges is to find qualified franchisees," said Ogden, who said investors need between \$219,000 and \$350,000 to open a Juiceblendz outlet.

"The benefit of this show is that peo-

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Franchises seek investors at expo

*EXPO, FROM 1C

ple are coming from all over the world and many of them are coming to buy," he said. "They know what they want."

The International Franchise Association, which is organizing the event, said it chose Miami Beach because it is a regional and international hub.

"We think that the southeast market of the U.S. is one with terrific growth potential," said IFA President Matthew Shay. "And increasingly we are seeing franchising embraced as a business model from countries around the world."

Shay said he was expecting many investors from Latin America at the event, which will also feature a series of free seminars in English and Spanish about choosing and running a franchise.

Franchise Expo South comes at a time when the

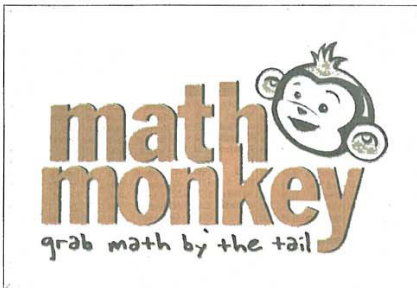
entire industry is booming. According to FranData, which studies the sector, there are more than 2,000 active franchise concepts in the United States. Between 2003 and 2005, about 900 new ideas were launched.

Among the fastest growing categories were child and education-related franchises, which saw growth of more than 25 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

Kirsten Fisch is one of the faces behind that statistic.

Fisch is the founder of Math Monkey, a Weston-based educational company that teaches kids 6 to 14 years old how to use Vedic math techniques developed in India to tackle complex arithmetic.

Launched just 18 months ago, the company has 23 franchises under development — including sites at North Miami Beach and Pinecrest that are slated to open in April.



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MULTIPLICATION: Launched 18 months ago, Math Monkey has 23 franchises under development — including sites at North Miami Beach and Pinecrest slated to open in April.

The total investment for a Math Monkey franchise runs between \$82,000 and \$145,000, Fisch said.

The company has attended three IFA events in the past,

along with several other smaller education-related expos.

"We attend a very aggressive trade show circuit," she said. "These larger events are

good places for us to be seen and recognized."

Companies such as Math Monkey are rapidly changing the face of the franchise industry, said IFA President Shay.

"Fifteen to 25 years ago, franchising was restaurants, hotels, lodging and real estate — brick-and-mortar-type things," he said. "Today there is a whole range of new products and services being delivered to consumers that would have been difficult to envision a decade ago."

While fast-food restaurants are still the dominant player in the industry, they represent just 19 percent of all franchises.

The array of options also means an array of price tags, said Michael Bush, a consultant with FranNet, a franchise that helps investors research and choose franchises.

The cost to open a home-based business can be as low

as \$35,000 to \$75,000, he said, while getting into the fast-food industry — which usually requires purchasing industrial equipment — can run from a few hundred thousand dollars to anywhere in the millions, he said.

But picking the right franchise should be as much about lifestyle as cost, he said. Bush asks his clients to think about everything from how many days a week they would like to work to the number and caliber of employees with whom they would like to rub elbows.

Somebody who wants a two-day weekend and seeks to mingle with a small group of college-educated people might not be the best fit for a fast-food restaurant, he explained.

"You have to do the analysis," he said. After all, he said, your line of work is "one of the top three decisions you could ever make in your life."