

Virginia

Company: **Rainbow Station Inc.**
Location: **Richmond**
Business Began: **1989**
Start-Up Cost: **\$40,000**
1996 Sales: **\$2.5 million**
1997 Projections: **\$2.6 million**

WHAT'S ONE of the biggest problems facing working families today? Just ask



PHOTO © BETH HORNLEY

pediatric-nurse-turned-entrepreneur Gail W. Johnson, who for years witnessed the anxiety of working parents who couldn't take time off work to care for their sick children. Johnson set out to establish a child education center and infirmary to meet the needs of two-career families.

Initially, her business plan focused on treating sick children with ailments ranging from colds to chicken pox. "But it seemed so depressing," remembers Johnson, 52. So she added an accredited preschool as part of Rainbow Station, in addition to what she calls The Get Well Place, which can care for up to 25 preschool-aged kids. She employs two nurses to care for the children.

Johnson, who now has three centers up and running in the Richmond area, is expanding her reach: She's building two after-school recreation buildings for kids aged 5 to 12.

Kansas

Company: **Thompson's Pet Pasta Products Inc.**
Location: **Kansas City**
Business Began: **1993**
Start-Up Cost: **\$25 million**
1996 Sales: **\$10 million plus**
1997 Projections: **\$30 million**

WITH HIS LINE of pasta for dogs, entrepreneur Richard Thompson is hoping to take a big bite out of the pet food industry. "We have a great product that dogs love," boasts the 45-year-old founder of Thompson's Pet Pasta Products Inc. "This is the first unique product to hit the [pet] market in 15 years."

Then again, pasta for dogs isn't as unique a concept as you might think—at least, not in Europe, where Thompson first spotted pet owners sharing their pasta with their canine friends. Having already



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