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## Executive Profile

By Kathy Hall  
Special correspondent  
Innsbrook Today Magazine

### Take care of the people and success will follow

Gail Johnson, founder of Rainbow Station, is all about taking care of people; from the families she serves to her employees and the general Richmond community. It has paid off in spades.

Gail is the CEO of a fast-growing business and has been recognized many times over for her professional and civic contributions.



Recently, Gail added three new awards to her growing collection.

This spring, Rainbow Station was recognized in two categories in the All Star Human Resources Award program: Workforce Development and Employee Retention and Engagement. The Annual Employee All Star Awards are an initiative of the Richmond Human Resources Management Association and the Greater Richmond Chamber.

Last fall, Rainbow Station won the Central Virginia Better Business Bureau's Torch Award for Business Integrity for businesses with 100 to 500 employees. The company will go on to the national Torch Award competition. Gail is pleased that Rainbow Station's commitment to doing the right thing is clearly recognized.

"I built this company around five core values, including integrity, and reinforce them at every opportunity," she said. "This award was tangible evidence that when parents trust us with their children, we do what we say

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The All Star Awards are confirmation that if you focus on your employees, then growth and profitability will naturally follow. At Rainbow Station, Gail encourages everyone to think like a business owner.

"Ownership is one of our five core values," she said. "To us, ownership means everyone is empowered to make decisions that are in the best interest of our families and the business. It also means we all hold ourselves accountable for our decisions and actions.

"At Rainbow Station, we invest heavily in employee development," Gail continued. "I believe our mentoring program is a best practice in our industry, or any industry for that matter. Our employees always have opportunities to take on new responsibilities and challenges. That's one reason why our turnover rate has historically been very low."

Gail founded Rainbow Station in 1989. As a pediatric nurse at MCV, she observed working parents struggling to provide unexpected and last minute care when their child awoke with the sniffles or a bellyache, as they invariably do. Gail thought: there has to be a better way. And there was.

She created the Get Well Place at Rainbow Station to provide backup childcare in a nurturing environment under the supervision of a full-time registered nurse. At that time, only about 300 organizations in the U.S. offered backup childcare. Surprisingly, 18 years later, that number really has not changed, despite the growing number of families with two working parents.

Rainbow Station also includes early childhood education programs including preschool, nursery school, private kindergarten and The Village, an after-school recreation and summer camp program. There are six Rainbow Station schools in Richmond. Long enrollment waiting lists prompted Gail to think about further growth.

"I was encouraged by the success of the schools and began thinking about expanding beyond Richmond," she said.

After considerable research, she ventured into the world of franchising in 1999, slowly at first as she put the right infrastructure in place to support the growth.

Today, there are Rainbow Station franchises in Virginia, North Carolina and Texas. In fact, Virginia's first three schools will open their doors this summer in Haymarket, Virginia Beach and Innsbrook's very own backyard in the community of Wyndham.

"It's been rewarding to give other entrepreneurial-minded people the opportunity to start a truly satisfying business without having to start from scratch," Gail said. "I enjoy helping them be successful."

Photo captions: LAURA – run the photos that you can with appropriate cutlines below.

Photo one: CEO Gail Johnson bestows the traditional Rainbow Station pin on Nicole Eubanks-Lambert, who is opening a Rainbow Station school in Wyndham this month.



Photo two: Gail Johnson, CEO of Rainbow station, and Earl Johnson help Nadiya and Ahmed Lakhani break ground in May on their Rainbow Station in Cedar Park, Texas. This school will be open in spring 2008 and will be one of several Rainbow Stations in Texas.

Photo three: Gail Johnson, CEO of Rainbow Station, shares a moment with Nadiya and Ahmed Lakhani at the May groundbreaking of their Rainbow Station in Cedar Park, Texas. This school will be open in spring 2008 and will be one of several Rainbow Stations in Texas.

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