

# Sunday Southtown

1906 • Celebrating a Century as the Voice of the Southland • 2006

★★

January 15, 2006

## Creative move: Creative Colors International flies coop in Tinley Park, lands in Mokena

By Howard Ludwig  
Staff writer

Creative Colors International flew the coop, literally.

The company, which started as J&J Creative Colors Inc. in a converted chicken coop behind the Tinley Park home of Jim and JoAnn Foster, has moved to Mokena.

Creative Colors provides on-site repair of leather, fabric, vinyl, plastics and carpet for the automotive and furniture industry. The company has 62 franchisees in 23 states.

The new office opened on Nov. 17 at 19015 Jodi Road in Mokena,

designed to provide warehouse and office space as well as an entire floor for training, said Terri Sniogolski, senior vice president.

"If you could have seen it (in Tinley Park), we were on top of one another," Sniogolski said, comparing the 2,000-square-foot office in Tinley Park to the new 10,000-square-foot space.

Sniogolski's parents started the business in 1980. She and her brother, Gary Foster, and sister, Kelli Bollman, took over the company in 2000. Kelli's husband, Mark Bollman, serves as president.

Now situated in the new office,

the family business plans to add 20 franchises this year, increasing its franchise business by 32 percent. Creative Colors has posted modest growth of 5 percent to 10 percent annually since franchising began in 1991.

"It's like we have been pulling back on a rubber band these past couple of years. Now, we are ready to make that rubber band snap," Mark Bollman said.

He predicts Creative Colors will have more than 200 franchisees by 2010. This month, potential franchisees in South Carolina, Wisconsin, Washington, Illinois

See **CREATIVE**, page F2



David Banks/Daily Southtown

Creative Colors International co-owner Kelli Bollman (right) shows Natalie Foster how to repair a leather product.

## Creative

Continued from page F1

and Michigan have expressed interest.

Franchisees pay a \$28,500 start-up fee, of which \$19,500 goes toward purchasing a territory and training, and \$9,000 goes toward supplies. Creative Colors has 22 trade-secret products.

Creative Colors spends two weeks training technicians and three weeks training franchisees. The concentration of hotels and restaurants near Interstate 80 and LaGrange Road near the new office was an important consideration in making the move, Bollman said.

The franchise contract guarantees the parent company 6 percent of gross sales as an ongoing royalty and a 1 percent contribution to an advertising and marketing fund.

Creative Colors expects to post annual sales of \$13 million in 2005, Bollman said.

The trade-secret products are mostly chemical solutions used to repair leather and vinyl. The solutions are heated to bond with the existing material and matched according to texture and color.

A similar process is used to repair leather jackets and furniture as well as auto dashboards and plastic molding. Another repair process is used to repair fabric seats, often found in vehicles and damaged by cigarette burns.

Used-car dealers are common customers of Creative Colors. In fact, each franchise territory is determined by drawing a boundary to include 20 dealerships, Sniogolski said.

Used-car dealers are such good customers, franchisees often fail to pursue other prime business such as restaurants, school bus companies, limousines and furniture retailers, Sniogolski said.

"The markets are endless, because the products are endless," she said.

Creative Colors executives operate a franchise in Chicago with 15 employees, two franchisees in Wisconsin with five employees and one franchisee in Florida with one employee.

Sniogolski said her family wants to add about two company-owned franchises per year in addition to the lofty goals for traditional franchises.

To accommodate the growth, Creative Colors has added four employees in the last four months, bring the payroll to 12 people. The company expects to add about two workers per year.

Entrepreneur magazine this month ranked Creative Colors No. 386 on its Franchise 500 list. The company also ranked No. 4 in the vinyl repair category, according to executive editor Maria Anton.

The company ranked No. 439 in 2005 and No. 396 in 2003.

Howard Ludwig may be reached at [hludwig@dailysouthtown.com](mailto:hludwig@dailysouthtown.com) or (708) 633-5954.