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## **Number of companies finding Warwick business friendly**

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In recent weeks, my office and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Development have been busy celebrating the openings of a number of companies. From a 26-year-old first time franchise owner, to parents who want to offer good services to other families, to individuals with financial expertise, these small business owners are already realizing success here in Warwick.

A Family Tree, which specializes in services for children between the ages of five and 14, offers before and after school day care, mid-day kindergarten care, summer camp and full-day Saturday child care. On a recent visit to the newly renovated 3,200 s/f facility on West Shore Rd., we found children engaged in a variety of activities, including cooking and dance classes as well as preparations for a super-hero themed party that afternoon.

Company president Erica Saccocio and co-owner and vice president Christine Alexander, both moms themselves, have established a curriculum based on National After School Association Standards, helping children to develop social and leadership skills.

Having opened A Family Tree in April, and already reaching the 70-child enrollment quota, they recently opened another facility across the city, which is also filled to capacity. Preferring to remain hands-on, on-site owners, for the foreseeable future, A Family Tree plans to keep their very fast-growing business to two locations.

Christine and John Weeden, co-owners of Kidz Kastle, an indoor recreation center for kids up to age 12, feel they have found a specialized niche in the childcare market. The Kastle opened two weeks ago across from the Warwick Mall and offers parents the opportunity to drop their children off, without an appointment, or to stay and play with their children. An inflatable bounce house, a fenced sports area, themed play areas and a movie theater with child-sized recliners are some of the amenities. With alarmed doors, video cameras, and employees who must pass a criminal FBI background check and be certified in first aid and CPR, the Weedens' goal is to offer parents a stress-free, peace-of-mind childcare alternative.

We also recently had the opportunity to join representatives from the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce at ribbon cuttings to celebrate two business openings/relocations: Flamand & Associates, where Melanie Flamand has taken 20 years' experience in the insurance industry to maintain a profitable business for the past four years, and Edward Jones on East Ave., where financial advisor Anthony Lizzi and branch office administrator Stella Maris-Martin have established an office.

Finally, June 4 proved an emotional day for Lisa Jordan, the 26-year-old owner of the new Tim Horton's franchise on Airport Rd. Her twin sister - also an owner of a Tim Horton's in southern Rhode Island - was among the many well-wishers on hand as Lisa and city officials cut the ribbon to officially open the store that has been a longtime dream.

We are pleased to welcome these companies and wish them continued success and growth in

Warwick.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.

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