

## Living their passion

Instead of clock-watching at a desk-bound job, some people find true career fulfilment by going the extra mile to live their dreams

# Building it brick by brick

Mothers Lim Choon Choon and Lum Siok Li provide educational programmes centred around experiential play with Lego at Bricks 4 Kidz.



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Mike Lee

MS LIM Choon Choon has always wanted to teach and venture into education. This passion was spurred after having her first child, a daughter who is now seven years old, followed by a son who is now four.

"Interacting with my own kids, I found that 'little brains' are amazing," she said.

"The first six years of childhood are the most important part influencing the whole life, and I wanted to make a difference in their growing-up years."

Ms Lum Siok Li's daughter is seven and son is two. She was always interested in being an entrepreneur and came across Bricks 4 Kidz while looking out for good business ideas.

Bricks 4 Kidz originated in the United States, and provides educational programmes revolving around experiential play with Lego bricks. Its programmes are built around proprietary model plans designed by engineers and architects, with themes such as space, construction and amusement parks.

The two women, both in their mid-30s, met as colleagues and found common interests as mothers of young kids. They spotted a gap in the childhood learning segment, and joined hands to become a sub-franchisee of Bricks 4 Kidz.

Ms Lum said: "When we first had the chance to experience the class, we were totally intrigued by the model plans and curriculum. We thought, if we can enjoy ourselves, children will absolutely enjoy it!

"Conducting classes using Lego bricks that engage kids' curiosity and creativity is something that we felt was differentiated and innovative."

They have been running their centre since February. Besides regular classes, the centre holds holiday camps, workshops, birthday parties, and other events.

### Starting up

Both are first-time business owners. Going the franchise route meant they would not need to start the business from scratch. Still, the duo had to figure out various business aspects, like marketing and staff recruitment.

Ms Lim has previous experience in project management and marketing roles, while Ms Lum worked in product engineering and product support roles.

Scouting for the right location for their centre was one of the biggest challenges, said the duo. After an extensive

# Model way to learn



*TIME TO REJOICE: Ms Lim (left) and Ms Lum enjoy watching kids gain confidence as they learn.* PHOTOS: MIKE LEE, BRICKS4KIDZ

three-month search, they inked a lease for a 1,200 sq ft space at The Grandstand, on the fourth floor with other childhood education programme providers.

They have taken to collaborating with tenants on the first floor, and doing road shows with the mall's management to drum up business. Mail drops, website and Facebook marketing are some other avenues they use to create awareness for the business.

The duo has invested a six-figure sum into the business, drawing largely on savings and some funding from relatives.



Their business is on track to breaking even within the next six months.

Their centre currently employs one full-time and three part-time teachers. They have 30 regular students, and the first batch of students is now into its second term. Each term's duration is six weeks.

### Road to growth

Enrolment is growing steadily as the centre looks to fill its weekend capacity. Weekends are

busy and both are grateful for the extra help from family members on those days.

Besides teaching, Ms Lim handles the lesson plans and staff training, while Ms Lum focuses on operations and administration. Both are involved in marketing and bounce ideas off each other.

Ms Lim is also interviewing and recruiting staff, and hopes to add two or three more teachers to the roster. Meanwhile, Ms Lum is marketing programmes to schools in the area.

Parent-and-child workshops will be offered, and preparations for the June holiday camps are underway.

Both are juggling full-time shift work at a multinational company, on top of their business and family commitments. Interaction time with kids and husbands at home have become more precious, thus both make it a point not to bring work home.

Ms Lim said: "I really enjoy teaching and feel satisfied to see the kids' faces light up in class. It is encouraging to see the kids make great improvements, from not being able to read the model plan in the first lesson to building a complete kit confidently."

Ms Lum added: "It gives me a sense of achievement each time to find a solution for an obstacle and overcome them."

For more information, visit [www.bricks4kidz.com.sg](http://www.bricks4kidz.com.sg)