

By: Shaphali Jain

Roopa Ramlogun & The Westchester Academy

Roopa Ramlogun owns and runs the Westchester Academy in Oldsmar, Florida, providing a valuable service to working parents - a safe haven for their children in a fun and educational environment. After having moved from Mauritius and having children of her own, she wanted a business in which she could be with her children and yet find a fulfilling career. She has managed to do just this with Westchester Academy. Read on to find out how she did it and what she's all about.

CM: Roopa, tell us where you're from.

Roopa: I'm from Mauritius and moved to the US in January of 1996 after I got married to Sam. He's been here since 1981 and initially we were in New Jersey for a short while where Sam was working.

CM: What brought you to Florida?

Roopa: I remember not being too happy in New Jersey. I was really home sick. Florida came about and we moved here in August of 1996. Florida reminded me of Mauritius - it has the same tropical feel and I love the sun! I felt at home here, although, I do have to say that ever since we moved here, I have yet to meet an Indian from Mauritius. I would love to meet more Indians from there!

CM: You own Westchester Academy. How did that come about?

Roopa: When we first relocated here, Sam kept his job and had to travel a lot. Over the years, the traveling increased and he was almost never home. Our daughter, Khushi, was born in July of 1999 at which point Sam quit his job and we decided to look into a business which could give us some more time with one another and our daughter.

CM: Tell us what made you decide on child care.

Roopa: Well, the first couple of months we just did a lot of research as we were a little unsure initially as to what exactly we wanted to get into. We knew it had to do something with the service industry. After considerable research, we decided on purchasing Westchester Academy which was an independently owned school and not a franchise. There is always need in the market for child care. Parents have to go to work and they need a place that opens early, closes late and offers a safe and stimulating environment for their children.

CM: Did you start Westchester Academy?

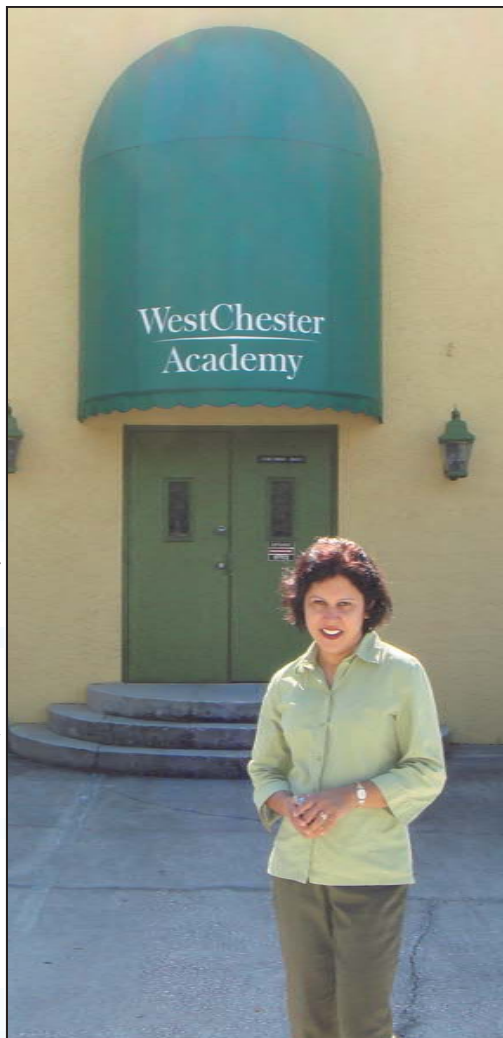
Roopa: No, we bought it from the previous owner who was already running it as a pre-school. The location is excellent as it's really central for people who work in the Tampa bay area. We bought it in November of 2000 and decided on an already established business rather than building one from scratch because it would be easier to take it off the ground.

CM: Did Khushi attend Westchester Academy?

Roopa: Absolutely, and so did my second daughter, Sejal, who was born in November of 2002. It was great to be able to enjoy them and be able to work at the same time. I was able to work around their schedule. I am a very hands-on mom and I have been lucky to have found a business which has allowed me to remain that way. The girls did very well at Westchester Academy.

CM: Tell us a little bit about growing up in Mauritius?

Roopa: My great grandparents are from India.



They went to Mauritius to work on the land like many Indians did at that time. I am the fourth generation of Indians from Mauritius and so is

Sam. We are Hindus and you will be surprised at how very much attached to India and to the religion we still are. We celebrate all the festivals, wear Indian clothes and love Hindi movies. We are very much in touch with the culture and go to India on a very regular basis. I have been to India four times! Most Indians in Mauritius are the same way and it is quite prevalent for them to go to India to shop before a wedding for traditional attire.

CM: Tell us a little bit about Mauritius.

Roopa: 52% of the population in Mauritius is Indian and we even have an Indian Prime Minister, Navin Ramgoolam. Education is a priority growing up in Mauritius. Most of the schooling is in Mauritius but since it has only one University which is really difficult to get into, people who can afford it, send their kids overseas for further education. Australia seems to be a popular spot these days.

CM: Why are last names spelled so differently as compared to the ones in India?

Roopa: I believe its because when we initially went to Mauritius, it was a British colony, and eventually they distorted a lot of our last names.

CM: How did Sam and you meet?

Roopa: Sam was living here in the US and went to Mauritius in 1995 to visit with his family. I met him through a cousin at a party. We kept in touch and ended up getting married!

CM: What role do you play in the school?

Roopa: Sam & I are the administrators. Kelly Banks is our director who was with the school even before we purchased it. When we had decided upon the purchase of the school, I enrolled at PTEC – Pinellas Technical Education Centers, which has a great program for childcare called Child Development Associate or the CDA. I learned how to build the right curriculum according to the age of the child. I felt that if I knew how to be a teacher, it would enable me to be better in business. Some of the teachers had been with the school for a long time. I needed to understand what they were doing as well as incorporate my own style the correct way. This training facilitated all this and more.

CM: How does having a director benefit the school?

Roopa: Well, our director, Kelly, had been there before we bought the school. She has a wealth of experience that has been invaluable to me. She is the direct contact person and deals with all the parents. Of course, I am always available but my role is more to ensure that regulations are followed and that we are in compliance with state laws. Kelly is extremely reliable and deals compassionately with the parents. She is my pillar and I couldn't have done this without her. I can go on vacations because of her!

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CM: Even though your school offers a valuable service, why would one choose it over other schools that offer similar facilities?

Roopa: We are different from other schools because in addition to providing the basics of child care, we offer some other excellent services as well. We have an open door policy – parents may come in unannounced at any time and have breakfast or lunch with their child. They are free to walk in to the classrooms as well. We also work at involving the whole family, parents and grand parents, during holiday celebrations. We are open all year around and are closed only for major holidays – 10 days out of the full year. Most pre-schools start at age 2, we start at age 1. We also do potty training for the children – by the time they leave the 2 year old classroom, they are almost fully potty trained. We also offer the Voluntary Pre-K program, or VPK, which is a free 3 hour program funded by the state of Florida. All that the parents have to do is sign up for it and it's absolutely free.

CM: What is your classroom environment like?

Roopa: We are licensed for 105 children but try



Kelly Banks in the classroom

to stay in the mid 80s to ensure proper child to teacher ratio and to prevent over crowding. Our teacher to child ration is very good.

CM: How do you feel about your line of business?

Roopa: I think it's a great business to have and I love the school. From Monday to Friday I take care of the children in my school so the parents don't have to worry - they are safe and get a great education. My evenings and weekends are my own and for my family. What better business

could there be?

CM: What are your future plans for the school?

Roopa: I want to work on offering more outdoor activities and to actually put centers outside. We enjoy such great weather here and children need to be able to appreciate the outdoors more. I want to build something where they can unwind and be children.

CM: What advice would you have for others who may want to get into a similar line of business?

Roopa: I would definitely recommend this line for other mothers, especially those with little children. As long as you have a little money put aside for a small down payment, you can get a SBA loan for the rest. I would suggest getting some training and education to support yourself in the business. Another very important point is to look at purchasing the property and not renting it. Paying rent is a waste of money.

For more information call Westchester Academy at 727-536-1622 located at 5690 Roosevelt Blvd. Clearwater, FL 33760.

If you would like to contact Roopa, her email address is oldsmar898@hotmail.com.

WATCHINDIA ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH YASH RAJ FILMS

yash raj films



Yash Raj Films' Top Titles are now available online for Pay-Per-View on WatchIndia.tv

New York, NY – November 20, 2007– WatchIndia today announced a strategic partnership with Yash Raj Films (YRF), India's leading entertainment conglomerate. Starting this month, WatchIndia will offer Bollywood films produced by Yash Raj Films via Pay-Per-View. WatchIndia offers the 4 million Indian expatriates living in the U.S. and Canada, live Indian TV, top rated channels and free video-on-demand – all with only an internet connection.

"A partnership with WatchIndia allows us to offer our top-rated films to a global audience through online digital download," said Mr. Sanjeev Kohli, director & CEO of Yash Raj Films Pvt. Ltd. "The growing demand for Indian films across the globe, coupled with the emergence of new mediums to offer our movie content, makes the digital arena one of our key focus areas for expansion in the future."

WatchIndia is starting with pay-per-view this month; thereafter all YRF content will be avail-

able in the Download Store in 2008. Eighteen YRF blockbusters including *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Dhoom:2*, *Fanaa*, *Veer-Zaara*, *Dil To Pagal Hai*, *Kabhi Kabhie*, *Dhoom* and *Ta Ra Rum Pum* among others will be available on WatchIndia starting this month.

"We are very excited to partner with Yash Raj Films to provide our users access to premier Bollywood entertainment," said Tripti Singh, spokesperson for WatchIndia. "WatchIndia's extraordinary success with over one million unique visitors per month is testament to the demand for Indian content online that offers flexibility to enjoy wherever you are."

About WatchIndia

WatchIndia is the first site from Live Asia TV, an innovative new Internet Television company whose goal is to bring ethnic Asian programming to those residing in the diaspora. WatchIndia partnered with top rated networks in India including Times NOW, Zee TV, Zoom, Zee Sports, IOL Movie Channel, Zee Punjabi, Zee Gujarati, Zee Cinema, Aastha and now Yash Raj Films.

For more information, or a free two-day trial, visit www.WatchIndia.tv.

About Yash Raj Films

Yash Raj Films (YRF) is the leading player in the Indian film industry and the country's premier independent Studio conglomerate. The Company's core lies in the production and distribution of some of the industry's highest grossing films. With offices also in New York, London and Dubai, YRF handles the global distribution of its own films as well as films of other leading Indian producers. The Company also has its own music and home entertainment labels, design cell and post-production facilities, internet, digital, merchandising and marketing divisions, as well as in-house units focused on the creation of television software, ad films, and music videos. YRF also has its own state-of-the-art fully integrated Studio, producing an average of 6 films a year, and thus making it an integral part of the entertainment business in India. For more information, visit www.yashrajfilms.com.