

# Belleville news

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## Local tanning salons reflect youth movement



Derik Holtmann/BND

The Tan Co. owners Kariann and Todd Roach by their Level 5 tanning machine. Their store is located at 1640 Carlyle Ave. in Belleville.

## Entrepreneurial couple acquire franchise together

BY WILL BUSS

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**BELLEVILLE --**

It always seemed like Todd Roach was usually the youngest.

"When I was playing sports, I was always the youngest on the team," Roach said. When I was a manager of a retail organization, I've always been the youngest."

But his youth should not be mistaken for inexperience. Despite recently launching his own tanning salon franchise, the 24-year-old had long prepared to be his own boss. Since high school, the O'Fallon-native has worked full time for retailers. Wife Kariann, 22, actually was the first to work for The Tan Co. The couple opened their The Tan Co. franchise in Belleville two months ago.

"I've worked for the company since I was 18," Kariann Roach said. "And what it did was when the opportunity came for me, we felt Belleville was growing, and we had a chance we could not pass."

Company founder Todd Beckman gave the couple that chance by awarding the franchise in January at 1642 Carlyle Ave. Beckman said those that work hard within the company like Kariann Roach did and can come up with a good business plan can lead to an opportunity.

"They're one of the few that have took it to that level to get a business plan and made it work for themselves," Beckman said.

Beckman also knows where the Roaches are coming from. He founded his tanning salon business in 1984 when he was 18 years old.

"I was working right out of high school," he said. "I was just not very good on the schooling side. I was always a hard worker. We started in the family business and worked hard, so I could own my own store. The rest is history."

Beckman initially operated his business inside beauty salons before opening his first tanning salon in 1994. Since then, the St. Louis-based chain has grown to 72 locations in 13 states, including 47 in Missouri. The Tan Co. expects to expand by another 100 locations this year and 500 more within five years.

Almost a quarter of franchisees own more than one store and benefit from the company's comparatively low start-up costs and simple business model. Estimated initial investment is between \$250,000 and \$500,000, depending on the number of tanning beds, and includes a \$30,000 franchise fee. Royalties are 6 percent of gross sales paid monthly and franchisees are required to make a 3 percent contribution to an advertising fund.

According to earnings filed with the Federal Trade Commission, The Tan Co. salons had average revenues of \$550,778 and an average profit of \$213,278 in 2006 -- two to three times the salon industry average. The company is the only tanning franchise in the nation to provide a comprehensive revenue, expense and net profit statement for prospective franchisees.

The Roaches reflect a growing trend within the American business. According to the studies conducted by Gallup, seven out of 10 high school students want to start their own companies. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics data from 2005 show that 370,000 people ages 16 to 24 were self-employed. In 1975, when baby boomers were young, 351,000 were in that same category. In August 2006, a Pew Research Center poll of 2,003 Americans ages 18 and over revealed those who are self-employed are considerably more satisfied with their jobs, salaries, job security, flexibility of hours and proximity of work to home versus other workers.

Back at Todd and Kariann's tanning salon, business has been booming.

"We're definitely exceeding what I thought we would be this month," Kariann said.

"Kariann and I have gone through a lot last year, getting married and setting up the business," Todd Roach said. "And every goal we've set for ourselves, we've worked hard and reaped the rewards of hard work. The key is that no matter what age or how young you are, if you set a goal and work hard toward it, you really can't go wrong if you do that."



The Tan Co. owners Kariann and Todd Roach inside their store at 1640 Carlyle Ave. in Belleville.



The Tan Co. level 3 stand up 9 minute maximum tanning machine.



Exterior The Tan Co. located at 1640 Carlyle Ave. in Belleville.