

WINMARK®



4 CUSTOMERS WHO BECAME RESALE FRANCHISE OWNERS



# Foreword

For many budget-conscious parents, investing in expensive clothing, toys and other accessories often feels like a waste of money when their children use these items for only a few months. The common source of frustration has motivated hundreds of thousands of customers to visit one of Winmark Corporation's five resale franchise concepts, including:

- Once Upon A Child®
- Plato's Closet®
- Style Encore®
- Play It Again Sports®
- Music Go Round®

Once customers of any of these resale brands experience the overwhelming need and demand for affordable, high-quality, gently used products in their communities, they're motivated to open business of their very own. In fact, 97% of franchisees within the Winmark family of franchise brands started out as customers.

Here are the stories of four franchise owners and how they discovered the businesses they ultimately decided to open in their communities.

**WINMARK®**

**PLATO'S**  
CLOSET®

**MUSIC  
GO  
ROUND®**

**Once upon a child®**

**STYLE ENCORE®**

**PLAY IT AGAIN  
SPORTS®**

# Chantelle Harder



**Owner of Once Upon A Child  
and Plato's Closet**  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

## What was your background before becoming a franchisee?

My husband was a pharmacist and I was an elementary teacher. We were one of the first groups of people running an online pharmacy. He asked me if I would consider leaving teaching to be part of the business.

Because it was a small community, I really enjoyed working with the local people. Eventually, we sold the business. From that point, we started a family.

## How did you discover Once Upon A Child?

After my kids were born, I actually discovered Once Upon A Child in the U.S. I loved it – I thought it was a great concept and store for parents. And I wondered why there wasn't one of these stores in Winnipeg. Then, I went online and started digging around to find out a little bit more about Winmark, filled out an application form and the rest is history.

I opened my Once Upon A Child in July 2011, then opened my Plato's Closet in 2014 on the other side of the city. I opened two more Plato's Closets in Calgary with a business partner.

## What made Once Upon A Child stand out?

I was a mother of four small children. There was a small consignment shop in my area but what they were offering me in exchange for my goods was outrageously low. I went and tested out Once Upon A Child in the states to see what it would offer. After that experience, I knew the concept would do well in Winnipeg.

## What lessons have you learned as a business owner?

When I first got started in business, I realized that giving back to the community is the most important thing an entrepreneur can do. And I realized, too, that it has to be more than giving a discount on the things you're selling or doing something in exchange for free advertising.

What we've focused on is getting involved in ways that don't really offer any sort of benefit to us beyond that the feeling of doing something wonderful for a community in need.

The Teddy Bears' Picnic is a pretty big family event in Winnipeg. All the proceeds go to the Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba. The program has been running for more than 30 years, so it's a very longstanding event. I reached out to them in my first year of owning my store. This is a family event and we're a children's resale store, so I thought it would be a great fit.

There aren't too many initiatives where families can go outside and enjoy outdoor activities for free in our area. At the Teddy Bears' Picnic, there are tents spread all over a local park, and they're filled with free activities. Some of them are educational, teaching event attendees about allergies and kids' sicknesses, and the importance of going to the dentist. A teddy bear hospital is set up to see what ailments the teddy bear might suffer from. We sponsor the Paw Prints tent, which is for face painting. We coordinate with high school students to volunteer to help with families lined up to get their faces painted.



### How else have you found ways to give back?

After each clearance cycle, we still have a good amount of inventory, which we donate to various places. One of those is a local First Nation's community, which is in dire need of clothing, footwear and outerwear. During the First Nation's free day at their community center, families come in and fill their shopping bags with what they need for their families.

We also give clothing – whole wardrobes, really – to families of domestic abuse who've had to flee their homes. When the agency contacts me, I just ask what sizes they need. We provide what they need to help them get by until they get to a point where they're in a safe place. We help out with victims of house fires.

We also help out refugees from other countries who emigrate here and aren't prepared for the cold winter, frankly. They can at least have a start in Canada that's going to keep them warm and hopefully help them feel a little bit more at home.

### Why is giving back so important to you?

Our purpose with the stores is really to help make the world a better place. I employ a lot of young people. Between the two stores just in Winnipeg, I have almost 40 staff members who range in age between 16 and 25.

I think it's important for the young people in my stores to see that it's not just about profit – not just about your bottom line. It's also important for my kids to see the importance of giving back. All of my kids have come to the Teddy Bears' Picnics and see how important it is to keep the spirit of generosity alive in their communities.





# Jennifer Springman



**Owner of Once Upon A Child**  
Waco, Texas

## What was your background before becoming a franchisee?

I was born and raised in Waco, but now live in a nearby suburb. While in high school, I helped out with my family's retail business. Later, I earned my teaching certificate. I also worked for the state of Texas regulating child care centers for seven years.

Most recently, I was a stay-at-home mom taking care of my two daughters and helping my husband with his information technology company.

## How did you discover Once Upon A Child?

My twin sister Janelle Brooks opened her Once Upon A Child four years ago. I became very involved with the brand, helping with the store and becoming a loyal customer myself – despite the fact that I lived four hours away from her store.

I loved to shop clearance racks and resale stores because my girls were rapidly growing out of their

clothes and shoes. But, our area didn't really have much to choose from in children's consignment or resale, so I thought it was a great opportunity to just start my own business in that space.

But ultimately, my sister definitely had an impact on my decision to own a Once Upon A Child. She was able to tell me the pros and cons and help guide me each step of the way.

## What made Once Upon A Child stand out?

A huge reason I went with Once Upon A Child is because the brand's track record of success. They're a leader in the children's resale industry with more than 300 locations across North America.

## What do you appreciate most about business ownership?

My favorite things about Once Upon A Child as a customer were the affordable prices, organized layout and how they buy all seasons, all day, every day and give you cash on the spot. As a franchisee, these are still some of my favorite things about the concept. I love being able to help my customers not only find new things they need, but also sell items they no longer use.

I also enjoy the flexibility the business provides my family and me, the network of supportive franchisees and the opportunity to partner with non-profits and give back to the community. During my first year in business, I spearheaded a store-sponsored fundraiser for CareNet Pregnancy Center, an organization that supports and empowers women and men faced with pregnancy decisions.

And one of my hopes is that one day I'll be able to pass this business on to one of my daughters when they grow up.

# Amanda Overmyer



**Owner of Once Upon A Child, Plato's Closet and Style Encore**  
Findlay, Ohio

## What was your background before becoming a franchisee?

Opening a Once Upon A Child location wasn't my first experience with franchising. I had previously owned a local pizza franchise. While that opportunity exposed me to the benefits of franchising, the corporate support and day-to-day assistance was lacking.

It felt like they just gave you the sauce recipe, and you were on your own. There was no marketing support or technology or any day-to-day help. At the same time, I was ready for a change from the restaurant industry.

The regulations were getting to be too overwhelming. I wasn't necessarily planning to find another franchise opportunity, but I was ready to leave where I was at. The timing just really worked out great.

## How did you discover Winmark franchise brands?

I shopped at Once Upon A Child for my four kids all the time. I saw a brochure at the register about owning a franchise. I took one home and started researching. I saw a lot of people saying it was a great franchise opportunity. Owning one really just seemed like a no-brainer to me.

Not only did I shop for my kids at Once Upon A Child, but as they got older we would go to Plato's Closet and Style Encore, too, which influenced my decision to invest in those businesses, as well.

## What made Winmark stand out?

I was really impressed by Winmark's corporate support. There was someone to help every step of the way. This stood out in such stark contrast from my previous franchise.

Winmark was particularly helpful around my opening. When the store first opens, we build up inventory and buy from customers only, which can be overwhelming. Luckily, I live in an area where a lot of people were ready to sell their gently used items, but that also meant so many people were in-store. Thankfully, there was a corporate employee there to help manage the chaos. The support was like nothing I had experienced with franchising before.

## What motivated you to open multiple locations?

I was familiar with all the brands since I was a customer of theirs with my kids. And seeing the success of my first store, I decided it was time to expand. I now own three Winmark resale concepts, adding a Plato's Closet in 2013 and Style Encore in 2016.

Owning a variety of the brands means your customers can follow the brands as they grow up, so I'm able to retain them as customers regardless of age.

I also love the recycling aspect of the business. At same time, I love being a job creator in the community and creating a fun atmosphere for my employees.

Simply put, I love what I do.



### What advice do you have for prospective franchisees?

An involved owner can really make all the difference.

I live down the street from my stores, so I go every day. I mostly work on background stuff like marketing efforts, but I'm always ready to lend a hand at the register or organizing racks.

Customer loyalty is another key for franchise owners. It's important to get to know your customers and understand what's going on in their lives, so their experience in store is more than just transactional. I want them taken care of like I'd want to be.

Finally, recognize the fact that the business isn't going to run itself and you have to embrace the fast-paced nature of the franchise concepts. You have to be able to multi-task and be active in working on ways to grow your business.



# Minda and Chelle Williams



**Owners of Style Encore**  
D'Iberville, Mississippi

## How did you (Chelle) discover Style Encore?

I first visited Style Encore on vacation. I love fashion, and I love bargains. Style Encore has an amazing variety of clothing brands, accessories and, most importantly, reasonable prices.

As soon as I got back home from my trip, I went online and looked to see where the nearest location was to me. Unfortunately, I couldn't find any nearby, so I decided – with my mom – to bring Style Encore to us.

My mother and I opened our store in Mississippi in 2017 in large part because of the success the local Once Upon A Child was experiencing, and we haven't looked back.

## What separates Style Encore from other resale concepts?

Not everyone can afford seasonal refreshes. Style Encore allows our sellers and buyers a way to do a closet cleanout, make some room and some cash, and perhaps find something to bring back home with them.

At the same time, we're big believers in strategically buying inventory and knowing when to replace old stock – this has been one of the keys to success for our resale business. We rarely buy everything someone brings in. It's important to search for the gems of the bunch. You know you've picked a good one when it's repurchased right away.

Other resale stores sometimes get stuck with unpopular items since trends shift quickly. We know when it's time to replace dated items with new stock. Keeping the racks fresh and full of popular styles attracts guests and drives sales.

There's a definite need and appreciation for the kind of business we operate. Most women want to touch, feel and try on the clothes they're looking to buy, and that's exactly what they get here.

## What have you learned about business ownership?

One of the quickest lessons we've learned is just how much business owners are uniquely tied to their local communities. The people have been overwhelmingly kind and supportive of what we're doing here. Although it's only been a few months, I already feel cemented in the community.

I establish that connection with members of the community by channeling my passion for fashion when assisting our customers. I love helping people find what they're looking for and putting a smile on their face. I enjoy challenging some of the customers to try on things that I picked out for them – things they wouldn't ordinarily pick for themselves. Some outfits work, some don't. Sometimes it just takes an open mind.



# Next Steps

Take the next step to learn more about bringing one of our resale franchise concepts to your community.

Visit [www.winmarkfranchises.com/our-brands](http://www.winmarkfranchises.com/our-brands) to see what each brand has to offer.

## About Winmark Corporation

Winmark Corporation, based in Minneapolis, creates, supports and finances business. Specializing in franchising, Winmark is the franchisor of the industry-leading resale brands Plato's Closet®, Once Upon A Child®, Play It Again Sports®, Style Encore® and Music Go Round® that buy, sell and trade gently used products. As of June 30, 2018, there were 1,224 franchises in operation under the company's retail brands, as well as an additional 62 retail franchises that have been awarded but are not yet open.

For more information visit [www.winmarkfranchises.com](http://www.winmarkfranchises.com).

