

# Making It Work

By Holly Beretto

## How Mom Entrepreneurs Accommodate Their Kids



Hands-on fun is the secret behind Shari Penner Riesenfeld's Mad Science franchise, which she started 10 years ago as a way to have more time with her two children.



### The Science of Entrepreneurship

Ten years ago, Shari Penner Riesenfeld was a single mom with two small children, wondering how she was going to support them without feeling like she was constantly away from home. Her solution was to open a franchise of Mad Science, an organization dedicated to fun science programs for kids.

Today, having just celebrated her 10th anniversary in business, Penner Riesenfeld's franchise is number-one in the United States; hers is one of 184 franchises that are part of the Montreal-based organization.

Throughout her history with Mad Science, she's been an innovator. Hers was the first Mad Science franchise to devise a specific summer program, and she's a leader when it comes to helping her 60 "Mad Scientists" work with Houston-area teachers to enhance their classroom lesson plans.

"I started my business to have a more flexible schedule for my kids," she says. "But it's been so rewarding to work with children all over Houston."

Mad Science offers interactive, fun science lessons for kids. Whether part of an in-classroom visit, or through after-school and summer programs, children learn science principles in a hands-on, age-appropriate way. Some days they might be learning about how heat and cotton candy are related. Others, they might be making green, oozy slime. Through it all, though, they are having fun.

"We have made such a difference in helping kids learn about science," Penner Riesenfeld says, noting that her organization works with more than 6,000 school children in more than 250 area schools. "They get to do these experiments and take something home; they think it's cool." •