

If There Were Our Town America Trivia, This Guy Would Win



Considering becoming a Franchise Owner?

If you're considering purchasing a franchise location, from any brand, of course, you'll want to do your research. The same is true for Our Town America. You'll likely want to talk to some of the people who know the company best. You might contact various Our Town America franchise owners, and at some point, you'll likely want to talk to the CEO, Michael Plummer, Jr. And then there's the real expert: Jack Kieffer.

That's our take, not his. Kieffer's a low-key, unassuming guy. But, in all seriousness, in a way, the Bowling Green, Ohio, franchise owner may have more institutional knowledge about Our Town America than almost anybody else. Kieffer, 69, has been part of the company since 1997, working there during the days of the late Michael Plummer, Sr., when Michael Plummer, Jr., was serving in the military in South Korea.

We caught up with Kieffer to get his story and his thoughts on being an Our Town America franchise owner. Kieffer is amicable and interesting, so the conversation flowed easily.

How he became an Our Town America Franchisee.

For 23 years, Kieffer worked at Nabisco. He started out as a representative, became an account manager and was eventually promoted to sales manager. Then one day, the layoffs began, and, for a while, they didn't stop.

"I don't think anyone I used to work with still works at Nabisco," Kieffer says.

After Nabisco, Kieffer began working for a direct mail franchise, one that we won't name but he describes as "kind of a pyramid scheme." While working with that company, he attended a convention. There he met Michael Plummer, the founder of Our Town America. Plummer's company wasn't yet franchised, and as Kieffer had soured on the company he worked for, he ended up jumping to Our Town America. Unlike the prior direct mail franchise, Kieffer had a feeling Our Town America was a solid, reputable business. He was right.

Kieffer was given his own territory — Bowling Green, Ohio — to work, but since Our Town America franchises didn't yet exist, he wasn't an official franchise owner. That would come later.

"A lot of people questioned franchising Our Town America, including me," Kieffer says. "But it was a smart move."

The best parts of being an Our Town America franchisee.

Kieffer says there are a lot of things he loves about his career path, but one of the biggest benefits has been the flexibility to own his time.

"That's been the best part of it," Kieffer says. "I got to coach my sons with baseball and wrestling, and they were very involved in 4-H, and so we've gotten to do a lot of that."

Additionally, he estimates since he started with Our Town America, he has gone on nine or 10 cruises with his wife.

“It’s also allowed me to do things that I didn’t have time for when I was working for Nabisco,” Kieffer says. For instance, he and a friend started a local baseball tournament that gives money to local schools’ sports programs in the area. Kieffer (who received no money for running the tournament; nor did his friend), says that they raised \$200,000 over 15 years before deciding to hand over the reins to other do-gooders.

The secret of any franchise owner’s success.

“You have to be somebody who is a self-starter,” Kieffer says, echoing what many Our Town America franchise owners have said. “You have to be someone who can work alone and be motivated. If you’re the type of person who has to have a timecard and a supervisor telling you what to do, this is not the job for you.”

Where does Kieffer go from here?

He isn’t sure. For now, he’ll keep building his business and meeting clients, an activity the community-minded business leader thoroughly enjoys. But sooner or later, as Kieffer approaches his 70th birthday, he is mulling over the idea of eventually retiring. So if there is anybody who lives in the Bowling Green, Ohio area and is thinking of becoming an **Our Town America franchise owner**, maybe you *should* contact Kieffer. In any case, he says he is glad Michael Plummer Sr. took a chance on him, and that he himself took a chance on Our Town America.

“This is a good business and career to have,” Kieffer says. “You don’t need any employees. You can run it all by yourself. And you can make a great living. It’s been a very successful and fulfilling career, and I highly recommend it!”