



Woman's Day

Calls Cheli Cerra "The Right Choice!"



THE RIGHT CHOICE Meet Cheli Cerra

BUSINESS: Eduville, Inc.
TYPE OF SERVICE: Helps parents find the right school for their children
HOW LONG IN BUSINESS: 2 years
BIGGEST OBSTACLE: "Convincing my family."
BEST MARKETING TIP: "Network. Find a professional association of women. Take business cards everywhere. Find a former mentor who understands what you are going through."
WEB SITE: www.eduville.com

Born in Cuba just when Fidel Castro came to power, Cheli Cerra moved to the United States at age 2 in the early 1960s.

"My parents left the country with five dollars and the clothes on their backs," she says. Cheli, who lives in Miami with her husband and two children, became a teacher and principal. "One thing my parents instilled in me was that people can take away material things, but no one can take away your education," she says. "My mom was a teacher and principal in Cuba, so it runs in the family."

Working in public education for over 18 years, Cheli met many parents whose children were having problems academically or behaviorally. Some had trouble with reading comprehension or could not stay focused; others had failing grades or wouldn't attend school consistently. "I saw a need for parents to get information that was factual and at their level, that answered, 'How is this going to apply to my child?'" she explains.

So she decided to take a leave of absence and start Eduville, Inc., a business that helps parents choose the right school for their child. Tapping into savings, she put together a Web site and wrote a book, *Every Parent's Guide to School Choice*.

At first her family was against the idea. "They couldn't believe I was leaving such a great job to do this." Instead of trying to convince them, Cheli put her energies into building the business. "They think it's great now. I'm a principal on a wider scale."

Today, Cheli, 44, works as a consultant. Once parents hire her, she evaluates a child's needs and interests. She fills out an intake form, and then does research to give parents the tools, information and resources they need to pick the best school, whether it is a public, magnet, charter, cyber-charter, virtual, private, parochial, boarding, military or home school. "A child needs to be given a choice and to have hope. When you have hope, anything is possible."

GETTING STARTED

- Create a professional office space. An office with a window is ideal. Clear out clutter, too.
 - Make a seed vision poster. Create a collage of what you'd like in your life with words and pictures. Put it where you'll see it every day.
 - Write your mission statement. Explain (concisely) on one page what your business is about and what you'd like to accomplish.
 - Create a business plan. Make projections realistic. Include overhead and expenses, and show how you'll make a profit. Have your accountant review it.
 - Do the research. Learn about rules, laws, insurance relating to your business, and get advice from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Go to their Web site, www.sba.gov.
 - Market your service. If your friend has a business, she can recommend you and vice versa.
- Lynne Franks, author of *The Seed Handbook*, www.seedfusion.com

WD ONLINE For more tips on how to start your own business, log on to www.WOMENSday.com.

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