

40 Under Forty

2006

Joyce Fastino

AGE: 39

POSITION: Owner and president, The Personnel People

RESIDENCE: Fall River

LIFELONG AMBITION: To be a psychiatrist

FAVORITE RESTAURANT: Mills Tavern

GUILTY PLEASURE: Chocolate

Joyce Fastino's mother never finished high school. She came from a family of 13, and she married, had six children, and had to work to help support them. But she made sure the next generation would do better – and her daughter most certainly has.

"My mother ... taught me that a college education and hard work was the key to a better life," Fastino wrote in her 40 Under Forty application.

Fastino got that education at the University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth. Then, after working for three years at Express, a large retail store, she took a job that allowed her to prove what she could do.

She started at The Personnel People as a staffing coordinator. She interviewed, tested and placed permanent and temporary candidates, and she found she had a knack for matching workers with employers. "I continued to thrive," she said, "because I genuinely enjoyed helping people gain employment."

In 1998, Fastino became the company's bookkeeper, drawing on skills she'd learned when she was 15. She began to learn how the company worked and gradually, she developed an interest in owning the company one day.

In 2002, Fastino bought the company. Since then, she's grown revenues by 80 percent.

That success wasn't an accident: Fastino has worked hard to modernize and streamline the company, starting by moving to a smaller, more efficient space, reducing overhead, and computerizing what had been a paper-based business.

She's also cut back on the staff and assumed some employees' duties herself, to reduce payroll expenses.

"I knew that there was a lot of fat to be trimmed, and when [that was] done, the company would become quite profitable," she said.

Fastino made a point of updating the company's image, getting a new logo, new brochures and a new Web site. She also got involved in the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, networking and expanding her clientele. In 2004, she won a Cornerstone Award from the Chamber for the company's long-standing membership, and last year, the Chamber featured The Personnel People in a small-business spotlight in its 2005 Progress Report. ■

