



Sarah Bigazzi operates the only Kumon Math and Reading Center in the Mobile area. The program is open during the summer.

Kumon: A New Way to Learn

A child's education should be a top concern for parents. **Sarah Bigazzi** believes this, and it's just one of the reasons she traded a career in Silicon Valley to open a **Kumon Math and Reading Center** franchise in Mobile. Located at 3461 Old Shell Rd., the center is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

Kumon's learning program was developed in 1954 by Toru Kumon, a concerned Japanese father and math teacher who set out to find a way to teach his young son math. He developed a system focused on mastering small steps before moving to the next level.

Today, Kumon is an after-school math and reading enrichment program

helping students of all ages and abilities become better self-learners. Whether it's challenges beyond basic schooling or help catching up, the program is designed to help students achieve academic and personal success. Kumon is not a tutoring program; instead, it's a coaching program to bring out the best in a child, according to Bigazzi.

Bigazzi's chosen profession was engineering. When her daughter was young, Bigazzi was interested in educational enrichment opportunities that would challenge her. Bigazzi was introduced to the Kumon Math and Reading Program, and by the end of her daughter's first year, she was reading

comprehensively and solving math problems above her grade level.

With centers available in 46 countries, Bigazzi was able to keep her daughter enrolled as their careers moved them around the country until they moved to Mobile, where there were no centers. So she decided to give up her job as an engineer, went back to school and became certified and trained in Kumon teaching. In 2009 she approached the Mobile SCORE chapter located at the Mobile Area Chamber for help starting her business. With SCORE's support, she opened the doors to the Mobile site.

In the first year, Bigazzi had 12 to 15 students. Currently, her center enrolls approximately 50 students

from Mississippi to Florida and north to Brewton, and it is growing. "My biggest patrons are grandmothers. They encourage their grandchildren's parents to enroll their children in the program," said Bigazzi. "And some of my parents have seen products of the program and come here to enroll their children. They want their children to be confident and able to compete with every child in every part of the world."

Go to mobilechamber.com/award.asp to submit a Small Business of the Month nomination, or contact Danette Richards at 431-8652 or d Richards@mobilechamber.com.