



Monica Pappas is president of Fingerprinting Express in Reno and Carson City.

PROVIDED TO THE REG

MONICA PAPPAS

Jessica Garcia
jgarcia@ngj.com

WHY WE'RE PROFILING HER

Monica Pappas, 36, is a lifelong entrepreneur who has a clear line of sight to serving niche markets no one else is serving. She recently was honored as a leader in the business community by the Reno Tahoe Young Professionals Network 2015 Twenty Under 40 Awards.

Pappas began her entrepreneurial career by earning a real estate license at 20. She owned two startup businesses in Las Vegas — a travel destination entertainment tourism company and an event planning, club concierge and promotions company — before moving to Reno to take over the family business.

Now the president of Fingerprinting Express, which offers fingerprinting for personal needs, job applications and licensing, criminal history state and FBI background checks and drug screening for employers, as well as notary public services, Pappas runs two stores in Reno and Carson City, with plans to expand to Sparks, Southern Nevada and the western United States.

HOW DID YOU GET THIS GREAT JOB?

Pappas: I was a single mother running my own company for years before I married my husband, Dave.

I wanted to spend more time with my son, Dave, had some health issues and my mother needed help with Fingerprinting Express after my stepfather fell ill. The business was struggling — if I had known how bad it was, I might have made different decisions.

It was all manual processes, so I set out to automate our processes and created our Culture to Care signature customer service standards. Last year, we did more than 41,000 sets of fingerprints with a 99 percent success rate.

WHAT DO YOU DO EVERY DAY?

I literally hold hands with our customers every day. Fingerprint scans are taken for myriad reasons — pre-employment screening, volunteer background checks, gaming licenses and foster parenting and adoptions, to name a few. Recently, a woman rode a bus from San Francisco to Reno to be fingerprinted by us for an adoption she was working toward.

It took only 15 minutes to get the best possible set, and within two hours the results were in. She started jumping up and down, hugging us all because now she could move forward with the adoption.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK IN RENO?

I am a third-generation Nevadan raised in Reno. My family is here, and this is truly a family business. Dave and I helped my mom get started in 2002. It seemed natural to move here to take over when she needed our help. My sister-in-law works here, too. We also wanted to return to a simpler way of life after years of working in the Las Vegas gaming and hospitality industry.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A KID WHO WANTS TO DO THIS?

Don't be afraid to follow your dreams. Don't be afraid of failure. Every time I have failed, I learned valuable lessons that contributed to my success. Be responsible, patient and care for your community by volunteering. You would be amazed how good it feels to help others. It's better than presents.

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

Our services get people to work faster. We assist applicants through a complicated process and make it seamless. As a board member for Volunteers of America, I love helping people complete the necessary background checks required for volunteer organizations. Because we believe so strongly in giving back to the community, we offer deep discounts for customers who are trying to become volunteers and to teachers.

WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE JOB?

After 9/11, fingerprinting became a requirement for many jobs and volunteer opportunities, but there weren't a lot of options available. Manufacturers of electronic transfer fingerprinting equipment would give anyone with a store front — like a mailing service or a smoke shop — a fingerprint machine and teach them how to use it. I've seen the industry grow from almost the beginning. With 12 years in this business, I've gained insight into the past and can see the trajectory into the future. It is all about education, standardization and training. We are specialists in a field where specialists are hard to find and we are raising the bar for quality service.