

Star-Telegram FORT WORTH

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North Texas, get ready for 31 flavors times 100

From his home in south Arlington, James Franks is directing the onslaught of new Baskin Robbins ice cream stores headed for North Texas and the rest of the nation.

The 38-year-old native Texan came aboard two years ago as the chain's director of franchising for stores throughout the world.

Just for North Texas, Franks told reporter David Wethe he has plans to sign up about 30 new franchisees, who will commit to opening a total of 100 stores over the next three to four years. Around the country, Franks is looking for 250 to 300 new franchisees to open 800 to 1,000 stores. Internationally, Franks and his team want to reach 300 to 400 franchises.

All of that is on top of the existing 5,600 stores in 40 countries. Sixteen are in North Texas.

So, what's with all the growth?

Franks, who helped build the regional growth of the Pro Cuts salon chain and is in his 17th year of franchising, said his strategy is called "small business small network." The key is to find franchisees who will open two to four stores in a fairly concentrated area. That helps reduce costs for such things as advertising and payroll. The stores could share and trade employees, Franks said.

Baskin Robbins, a 61-year-old brand owned by Canton, Mass.-based Dunkin Brands, underwent a complete store makeover in late 2005. That helped usher in the growth. Previously, the chain was focused more on growth in the Northeast and overseas, Franks said.

He is particularly proud of a new store that opened near him at Interstate 20 and Cooper Street. "It's a fun place to hang out," said Franks, whose family goes there weekly. His ice cream of choice is Candy Bar Madness, a concoction of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and hot fudge. "It's my favorite this week," he said.

The famous doctor is in

Oprah's favorite doctor is coming to the Metroplex to persuade American Airlines employees to behave like "smart patients."

Dr. Mehmet Oz -- a surgeon, author and regular guest on Oprah Winfrey's show -- is slated to host a town hall meeting tonight with the airline's workers and their families.

He's expected to offer advice about making well-informed healthcare decisions and speak about the movement toward "consumer-driven healthcare" that's forcing patients to shoulder more of their own medical expenses.

The visit is sponsored by UnitedHealthcare, the health insurer whose largest Metroplex client is American.

A new goal, a new look

What's in a name?

To better reflect the organization's mission, Historic Camp Bowie Inc. has formally changed its name to Camp Bowie District Inc.

The announcement was made last week, but the switch was effective March 1. The seven-year-old organization was formed to promote economic development along Camp Bowie Boulevard, beginning at University Drive and heading west. The new name is more indicative of those economic development goals, they said.

"Our mission has always been to create a pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor that encourages people to shop in a safe and comfortable environment and have a gratifying urban experience," President Brandy O'Quinn said in a statement. "And we will continue to focus on these issues, just under a different name."

The organization started the annual Jazz by the Boulevard festival and the Camp Bowie Crawl dining and shopping promotion. Both have brought awareness to the Camp Bowie area, the group said. Moreover, the group helped bring about a mixed-use ordinance that has resulted in increased pedestrian, shopping and dining activity all along the boulevard, the group said.