

Twenty-Five Years Later: A Memory That Still Guides Me

Wendy Kunz, Director of Veteran Programs, IFA

On September 11, 2001, I was just beginning my journey in franchising, attending Sylvan Learning's annual conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

My husband, Matt, and our one-year-old son had traveled with me so we could enjoy a long weekend together before the conference began. They were scheduled to fly home that morning while I attended the conference.

Instead, history changed.

As news of the attacks spread, our conference sessions immediately ended, and everyone was directed to gather in the ground-floor lobby. The uncertainty was overwhelming. Flights were grounded. Information was limited. Fear and confusion filled the room.

I'll never forget scanning the crowded Marriott lobby and seeing my little blonde-haired son perched on his dad's shoulders, safe and smiling. In that moment, nothing else mattered. It was one of the greatest feelings of relief I have ever experienced.

We were gathered just across from Baltimore's World Trade Center, watching the events unfold alongside hundreds of others who were trying to understand what was happening to our country.

Like every American, I can remember exactly where I was that day. September 11 reminded us how quickly life can change, how precious our loved ones are, and how resilient the American spirit truly is.

Twenty-five years later, I still carry that memory with me. It also gives even greater meaning to the work I do today with veterans. So many men and women answered the call to serve because of that day, choosing to risk their lives to protect the freedoms we cherish. Their continued leadership, service, and sacrifice inspire me every day, and it is an honor to help many of them find a new mission through franchise ownership.



Wendy Kunz serves as Director of Veteran Programs at the International Franchise Association (IFA), where she leads initiatives that connect veterans with franchise opportunities and resources to support their transition into business ownership. Drawing on her passion for service and the power of franchising, Wendy works to help veterans and military families find their next mission and build successful futures through franchise ownership.

