

*What these five entrepreneurs lack in age and experience they make up for with ambition.*

BY PAM GEORGE

Ah, youth. Remember when life was filled with a sense of endless opportunity? What you wouldn't give to have that same feeling today, right? While you may not be able to turn back the clock, the wide-eyed optimism of others may still inspire you.

The subjects profiled in *The Richest Kids in America*, by Mark Victor Hansen, co-creator of the bestselling series *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, have active imaginations and no small amounts of ambition and business acumen. The book was written with children in mind, but the featured go-getters offer insights that can benefit entrepreneurs of any age.

#### THE TASTEMAKER

### Allyson Ames

President and co-founder,  
Wonderland Bakery

WHILE HER FRIENDS WERE OUT playing, five-year-old Allyson Ames spent her time baking. By the time she had graduated at the age of 19 from the International Culinary Institute, she and her mother had created a 95-page business plan for Wonderland Bakery, which they opened

in Newport Beach, Calif., in 2005. "It is my dream," says Ames, now 23, who was named one of the hottest celebrities under 25 by *Variety*. "I'm doing what I love, touching lives in a sweet and powerful way."

A different kind of sweetness sticks to everything the company does, even the



non-edible offerings. From the Web site cursor that trails sugary dust to the Allyson Wonderland doll, everything is fairy tale-like, including baking kits, tea sets, stuffed animals and a read-along book.

Wonderland has racked up more than \$2.5 million in sales and has a fan base that

includes Whoopi Goldberg, whose praise of the bakery's gingerbread men on *The View* resulted in thousands of orders. This kind of success has required sacrifices.

"I don't have much of a social life outside the business right now, but that's a commitment I made when I started. Also," she

adds, "I love shoes and purses, but wearing stilettos in the bakery is a bit impractical."

Among her business strategy tips for other aspiring entrepreneurs: "Stay open to opportunities. Instead of 'No,' use 'Not yet.'"

THE SCIENTIST

## Jasmine Lawrence

Founder, EDEN  
BodyWorks

JASMINE LAWRENCE WAS 11 when she used a chemical hair relaxer that was so harsh, it nearly broke off all of her hair. She began hunting for gentler products but found few, so she purchased the ingredients to make them herself. The result: an all-natural hair oil that sparked hair growth. She gave some to friends and family and debuted it to the public after she attended business camp at 13 and launched New Jersey-based EDEN BodyWorks.

"In the beginning, I made batches with the help of family and friends," says Lawrence, now 18. Eventually, the oil was factory-made, and EDEN expanded to include more than 30 hair-care and aromatherapy products.

"The business took a lot of time," Lawrence says. "It was like raising a child. I stayed motivated by reading my blog. I loved the comments that people left me about how my products helped them or someone they knew."

Despite the time commitment, Lawrence maintained a 4.0 grade point average in high school. "Education is very important to me," she says. So much so that last fall, she put her business on hold to study computer engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She vows that EDEN BodyWorks will return and wants to continue the line while working as a computer engineer for a government agency like the CIA.



THE  
PENCIL PUSHER

## Jason O'Neill

Founder, Pencil  
Bugs Plus



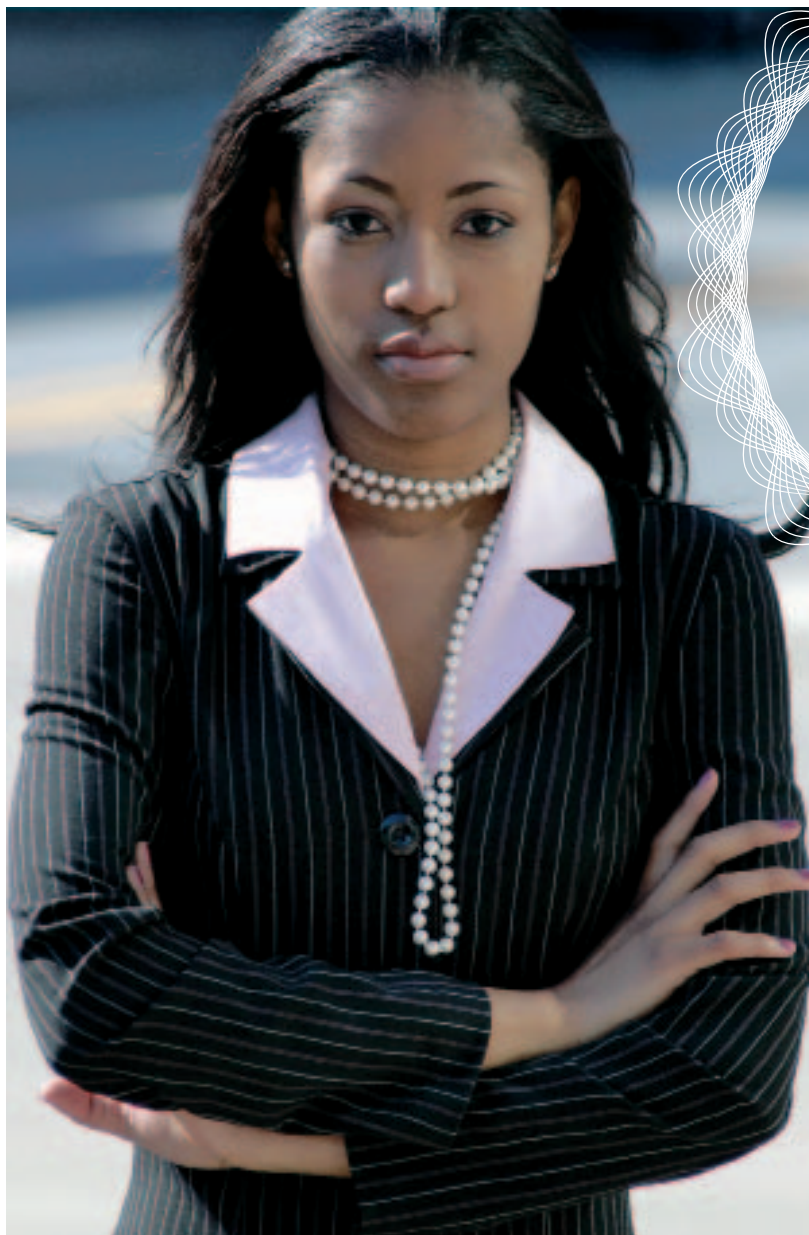
JASON O'NEILL OF Temecula, Calif., can't remember a time when he did not want to make money. At age five, he was running lemonade and hot-chocolate stands and selling cookies outside his house. When his mom suggested he participate at a craft fair, O'Neill, then in fourth grade, created a series of eight cute pencil-toppers called Pencil Bugs. Each one came with care and training instructions as well as a certificate of authenticity. Bookmarks featuring pictures of the characters soon followed, along with greeting cards and birthday invitations. (O'Neill's advice for would-be entrepreneurs: "Always look for new opportunities to expand your business. Branch out.") Future plans include a picture book, plush toys, a board game, a video game and a cartoon series.

The young entrepreneur and his parents currently hand-make the products on weekends (but they will soon employ a manufacturer). O'Neill, now 14, says his parents are his main mentors. "With their help, I have been able to stay motivated," he says. Of all the lessons he has learned during the creation of his mini-empire, the most important has been the value of people who believe in you.

"No one can do it alone, not even adults, so find people who can help teach, support and encourage you—and then be willing to listen," he says.







THE BRAND SPECIALIST

## Chauncey Holloman

CEO, Harlem Lyrics

NECESSITY WAS THE MOTHER OF invention for Chauncey Holloman, who was frustrated when she couldn't find a fun, age-appropriate birthday card for her best friend's 16th birthday. In 2003, using her mother's tax refund, Holloman, then 15, started a hip-hop-inspired greeting-card company called Harlem Lyrics, which she expanded after winning a \$10,000 grant. In 2005, she added notebooks and folders to the line, which became available at regional Kroger stores, and clothing, which can be found at Macy's. All of the products feature characters modeled after friends and family.

The company consumes an increasing amount of the 21-year-old's time. Holloman's mother handles the company's day-to-day operations while Chauncey studies theater and business at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. Chauncey is confident that she can balance the company and an acting career. "Both require the same skills," she says. "You must know how to market yourself."

To other young entrepreneurs, Chauncey offers the following advice: "Remember that no one knows your business better than you. It's easy to be intimidated when you face people who have been in business for years. But I always tell myself that I am the expert on all things Harlem Lyrics," she says.



BY AGE 21, CAMERON JOHNSON HAD OWNED 12 COMPANIES. "THE process is what I enjoyed, and when I came up with a new or better idea, I'd move on to the next business," says the now 25-year-old Roanoke, Va., resident. Some of

the highlights from his busy career: At age 9, he made greeting cards and stationery—anything he could print from his computer. Then he sold Beanie Babies stuffed animals over the Internet, shipping 40 orders a day from a closet in his parents' basement. He opened his first checking account when he was 10. He started a Roth IRA at 14. At 15, he created an online advertising company

THE SERIAL  
ENTREPRENEUR

## Cameron Johnson

President, Cameron  
Johnson Inc.

HOLLOMAN: FREDERICK NASH

“One of my mentors says, ‘Always make your future bigger than your past.’ I’ll hopefully be doing just that.”

—CAMERON JOHNSON

that placed 15 million ads per day in just six months, garnering 200,000 customers and generating \$15,000 a day in gross revenue. At 17, he launched Emazing Sites, a holding company for Web properties.

Johnson conducted business after soccer practice and after his parents went to bed, and he rarely talked shop with friends. “I definitely believe in separating your personal life from business,” says Johnson, who is also the author of *You Call the Shots*, targeted to aspiring entrepreneurs. While at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, he started a Web site on which users sold unwanted gift cards. Today, he’s a speaker and the force behind *millionairesecrets.com*.

Among Johnson’s mentors are Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Michael Dell, Richard Branson—and his parents, who taught him to save money.

Whatever Johnson has in store for the future, expect it to make waves. “One of my mentors says, ‘Always make your future bigger than your past,’ he says. “I’ll hopefully be doing just that.” **M**