

SMALL BUSINESS

By ADINA GENN

What a franchise

Ken Stein, president of the Long Island office of FranNet, which matches entrepreneurs with franchises, says that exercise facilities are hot.

The reason? Obesity and diabetes are prevalent, and new dietary guidelines were released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture this year. So, the fitness and weight loss category is holding strong and expected to grow. Stein has his eye on express workouts for women, and expects to see more gyms exclusively for men in 2006. Another popular category: franchises that offer one-on-one personal training and nutritional counseling.

Stein also recommends business

services franchises that enable small businesses to outsource everything from signage to IT services. Because small businesses are critical to the economy, Stein anticipates growth in this sector.

Though the housing market has cooled down some, Stein said home improvement remains a strong category.

Basic consumer services, including home-cleaning and dry-cleaning providers are also in demand. And services for elderly, including home maintenance and personal assistance is another growth segment.

Other strong sectors include financial services and consulting, including income tax preparation and sales training, as well as human resources staffing and consulting, especially given the need for skilled workers.



Stein: Time so shape up.