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The Record BUSINESS

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AT HOME

He turned fatherhood into a sweet niche

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The birth of a child is life-changing, to be sure.

For Rich Fallon, the 2002 arrival of his son Nicholas brought all the expected joys and challenges – from first coos and soiled diapers to heart-melting smiles and 3 a.m. feedings.

But it also brought the unexpected in the form of Occasion Essentials, a business Fallon runs from his Wood-Ridge home that sells personalized candy bar wrappers and other picture-laden products that celebrate a family's youngest members.

"I was looking for candy bar wrappers for my son's birth announcement," recalls Fallon, 36.

Like scores of other parents, he wanted to shout out the details of his son's arrival on a chocolate candy bar wrapper that included Nicholas' picture. When he couldn't find the wrappers locally, Fallon decided to pay for his son's announcements to be



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Rich Fallon's home-based business, Occasion Essentials, sells personalized candy wrappers for parents announcing a birth.

shipped from out-of-state, figuring along the way that there might be a market need for similar personalized products in North

Jersey, and beyond.

"The shipping charges were double what the product itself cost," he recalls.

"I immediately started researching how to do my own business for local markets to basically become a local candy wrapper company."

Fallon, who maintains his day job as a management information systems manager at Outwater Plastics Industries Inc. in Bogota, spent about \$15,000 to launch the business.

The money went toward a computer upgrade and buying wrappers, candy bars, brochures and modest advertising.

But he quickly realized he needed more than one product to reach profitability.

He created mylicense.com, which sells personalized driver's license birth announcements. Foilman.com followed, selling the foil wrappers wholesale for other home-based businesses that sell candy bar wrappers. And he does some online training for others in

the personalized goods field.

In all, his sites sell personalized items for children of all ages, including books, pillows and throws, sweatshirts and an array of customized sports gifts.

"I had to branch out to keep afloat," says Fallon, who manages the business after dinner until about 2 a.m.

He says that after three years he's "semi-profitable" but doesn't earn enough to live on, "especially in Bergen County."

Fallon credits his wife, Lisa, who teaches in Rutherford, for helping him carve out time to run the company, especially since the couple added daughter Kaitlyn to their brood in 2005.

"The biggest challenge right now is not having enough time," he says.

"Being a one-person company, you have to do everything."

At Home appears Thursdays. To share your story about working from home, e-mail mcaleavy@northjersey.com.