A young girl growing up on her family's farms in Floyd Knobs and Charlestown, Alice J. Schleicher, really didn't know what she was going to do when she grew up. She knew what she loved to do, she loved music. She took piano lessons for nine years and loved singing in her church's choir and enjoying time at church camp and church activities.

Little did she know, her love for music would never change, but her passion would turn into a successful 35 year, and counting, run as a KFC franchisee.

Schleicher can recall how it all began. Her son, just 16 years old at the time, worked for the Kentucky Fried Chicken in Sellersburg. He came home and announced to his parents, "the store is for sale and I want to buy it." A brilliant idea from such a young business mind. Shortly after the announcement, the Schleichers had the initial meeting with corporate. The meeting went well and Schleicher left the meeting, knowing she wanted to own and operate the Sellersburg Kentucky Fried Chicken.

That was 1977. Many things have changed for Schleicher since the 1977 purchase of the Sellersburg KFC. Now, the Schleicher family is preparing for another milestone. Alice is celebrating her 35th anniversary with KFC. The Sellersburg store was purchase on July 1, 1977.

"I have enjoyed it. I have enjoyed 35 years. Did I think I would be celebrating 35 years, I had no idea. Everyday I do my best. If I made a mistake yesterday, I know I will not make it today," stated Schleicher about her career with KFC.

She has a motto that is her rock, literally. A little rock sits on the corner of her desk inside the office located behind the original store bought in 1977. The little rock has a very powerful quote from Albert Einstein, "In the Middle of Difficulty Lies Opportunity." The rock states what Schleicher knows. Nothing is easy and with teamwork, everything is possible.

"We focus on people. Focus on the customers. The Golden Rule is what we live by, treat others the way you want to be treated," Schleicher stated.

Her daughter, Kimra, goes on to explain just how passionate her mother is about her crew.

"She always sends out personal recognitions. She sends hand written letters. Everybody loves to work for her. She gives managers what they need and then they give her their best," Kimra explained, as Alice took a phone call from one of her workers. The conversation sounded like family talking to each other. A mutual respect on both ends of the telephone.

"We are always doing team building. We can talk business and have a good time. You make them feel important, they are important. You have to know what is going on in their personal life. You have to care," Alice stated.

Schleicher has always had a hard work ethic and never liked being late. She never missed a day of high school. Worked diligently in 4-H for 10 years and was the first Floyd County 4-H Queen. She loved the sense of accomplishment even at a young age.

"I am always very punctual. I never like to be late. It is just the way I was brought up. We were always early for church," Schleicher explains.

After graduating from New Albany High School, Schleicher enrolled at Indiana Central. She learned very quickly she had a natural talent for basketball. Although she was reluctant to admit

she was good, she played four games and had to give up the sport.

"I was on a music scholarship. It (basketball) was overlapping the music. I had to run from it and when I got there I would be out of breath and my professor of music didn't like it," Schleicher recalled fondly. "I had to quit after just four games. The coach kept trying to talk to me but I just couldn't. My professor of music said no."

Schleicher went with what she thought was going to be her thing, music and choir. Of course, music was, and still is, a big part of her life. She has played the piano for her church, sang at weddings and in the church choir.

She has attended the same church her entire life, Atkins Chapel United Methodist Church. There is not a position within the church that Alice has not held at some point. She still recalls fondly the memories of church camp and the people she met while attending the camps.

After attending Indiana Central for one year she came back to Southern Indiana. She came home and went into the financing field. She praised the boss she had, Charlie Guilfoyle, and the number of people she met that made a lasting impression.

"It really benefited me for what I do. I have worked in collections, worked with everything there. I worked until I became a stay-at-home mom. Then I worked part time for them. I worked vacations for them when we lived in Jeff," Alice recalled.

Once Schleicher went back into the career field, she has not slowed down.

"I have always been busy, my entire life. I just stay busy," a very humble Schleicher explained.

Alice purchased her second store, the Madison store, in 1983. A trip to the Madison store with her daughter turned into a little more than what she expected. Corporate wanted Schleicher to broaden the scope of her franchises with stores in Huntsville, Alabama. She was not sure if she wanted to purchase anything out of her local market. The argument from corporate was, 'it is only four and a half hours down 65.' Really what Schleicher was thinking was getting the Madison store ready for the Regatta. She drove to Madison and walked in the door ready to prepare her store and workers for the busy Regatta weekend. Schleicher was met with a message. A message to call the franchise owner of the Huntsville area stores.

"I called him and he told me he would see me Monday morning at 10. I just thought what time I would have to leave. We would have to leave at 6 to get there," Alice stated.

The Monday morning meeting set up for Alice she attended. The franchise owner would not meet her in the restaurant because he did not want anyone to know the stores were for sale. After the meeting, she went to check out the stores.

She drove down to Huntsville and back to Southern Indiana. A mere six months later, the Schleichers had expanded their franchises into Alabama. Expansion became normal for Alice. The Birmingham market was added in 1987 then Nashville was added in 1999. She also acquired the Louisville market in 1999.

At one point, Alice was the female with the most KFC franchises owned at 65.

"I just knew you had to build a good team. A good team is what makes you successful," Alice stated.

With stores stretched across Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama, Alice has to have confidence in the ability of her managers. She still enjoys working with people and learning about those who work for her.

"It is a team effort. If you don't give respect, you will not get respect back," Schleicher explained.

After 35 years of a successful plan of operation, Alice is willing to share advice to help a fellow business woman planning to open a business.

"One thing, you must be very well organized. You must have dedication to your family and dedication to your business. They rank up there together. You have to balance life. To be successful you have to do what it takes to get the job done," Schleicher explained. "It wasn't all gravy. It wasn't then and it's not now. The bottom line is, you do what it takes to be successful. My mother taught me whatever you do, be the best at it. You really have to be a good people person. Be a good listener and help them solve their problems. It is like a partnership, a marriage. You have to care, you have to be a caring leader. I have always done that."

Schleicher added what the most important thing she has learned in the last 35 years, "I think for me, count your blessings!"

Sitting behind the desk in front of a wall decorated with every award offered by the KFC franchise, Schleicher takes a moment before answering the question, "where do you see yourself in five years, or 10 years?"

"I think I would like to slow down and smell the roses but I have to say, I am still having a good time. I enjoy people. You have to appreciate your team. It is a joy to me to see them progress and to know that you have been an influence to them," Schleicher concluded.

To help celebrate her 35 years in business the Alice J. Schleicher, Inc. KFC stores are offering a special June 30- July 2: a 2 piece meal for $3.50 and 35 pieces of chicken for $35. Drinks are also always offered for $1. Locally the special will be available at KFC stores: In Indiana: 7604 Highway 60 in Sellersburg; 4301 Charlestown Road in New Albany; 2124 State Street in New Albany; 1117 Eastern Boulevard in Clarksville; 1426 E. 10th Street in Jeffersonville; 401 Clifty Drive in Madison; 1850 North State Street in North Vernon; 1446 E. Highway 50 in Washington; 1425 James Avenue in Bedford and 10430 N. US Highway 31 in Taylorsville; In Louisville: 10103 Dixie Highway; 10224 Taylorsville Road; 4441 Cane Run Road; 5462 New Cut Road; 6908 Dixie Highway and 4020 Shelbyville Road.