

GREEN AND CLEAN —AND CLEANING UP

In the not-so-distant past, the dry cleaning industry was known for two things: creating the most millionaires and pollution. Regarding the latter, Lapels Dry Cleaning, a Hanover, Mass.-based franchisor, has worked diligently to clean up what has historically been a very dirty business.

“You don’t have to be a scientist to know the chemicals used by dry cleaners were having a negative impact on the

environment,” said Kevin Dubois, CEO of Lapels Dry Cleaning. “We started building our environmentally non-toxic cleaning process before it was hip. We really thought there was a better way to clean clothes and at the same time be respectful to our planet.”

A Green Commitment

Lapels Dry Cleaning’s green commitment starts by using the most advanced technologies and processes. The key ingredient to that is a partnership agreement with GreenEarth Cleaning, LLC to use GreenEarth® cleaning solutions.

GreenEarth represents the dry cleaning industry’s only non-toxic cleaning alternative. GreenEarth silicone’s unique, non-aggressive cleaning solution enables

it to penetrate fabrics and remove soils without chemically interfering with the textile fibers themselves, helping to maintain their “like-new” look and feel.

Since 2014, new Lapels Dry Cleaning plants and stores have employed GreenEarth cleaning solution. Several existing Lapels Dry Cleaning plants have upgraded dry cleaning equipment to be able to use GreenEarth. When a new plant or store opens, it can confidently make the claim of “being a 100% environmentally non-toxic cleaner with zero hazardous waste in the process from start to finish.”

In 2015, Lapels Dry Cleaning started using new dry cleaning machines to best utilize the GreenEarth cleaning solution. Unlike most other dry cleaning processes, the new machine, specifically made for Lapels Dry Cleaning, heats the solvent, reducing drying times. The new dry cleaning machine also features an onboard computer to provide maximum efficiency in programming and operation.

The combination of new equipment, improved programming, and heating the dry cleaning solvent has resulted in a 53-minute dry time, creating a 20 percent reduction from previous machines. That translates into a faster turnaround time, which improves the customer experience and increases retention.

Adds Dubois, “These improvements benefit our franchise owners as well. With a more efficient dry time, they can clean more clothes, making them more profitable.”

Lapels also builds their stores with great respect to the environment. Signage employs LED lighting. Granite is used



Brian Culver, former Navy pilot, and Stacy Culver, Lapels Dry Cleaning of OKC Owners



Kimberley Wilkinson, owner of Lapels Dry Cleaning of Marshfield and Lapels Dry Cleaning of Kingston, at the presses.

“With the Lapels opportunity, we were able to put a program in place where we will clean used suits that are in good condition and, through the Paralyzed Veterans of America, make sure they get to job-seeking veterans.” - Brian Culver, former Navy pilot and Lapels Dry Cleaning of OKC owner

run a dry cleaning business, regardless of what you previously have done,” said Dubois. “The environmental angle and being a business you can learn has been a draw for our franchise owners, most of whom had no prior experience in the industry and several who are first-time entrepreneurs.”

for counter tops. Wet cleaning machines minimize water consumption. Stores use low VOC paint for the walls, and a low VOC adhesive to adhere the storefront flooring.

Lapels customer service initiatives also lower the carbon footprint for customers. For example, Lapels has a Smartphone app that enables customers to schedule deliveries and pickups, notify the store that they are on their way in and view their receipts as well as a number of other functions.

“A huge part of being greener is to use less energy—electricity, gas for your vehicle,” said Dubois. “The technology improvements we have made make it faster for clothes to be cleaned and make it more efficient for customers to receive their

clothes. And that’s a scenario where we all win.”

Creating an Environment for Success

Much of Lapels’ green efforts focus on efficiency and that starts at the top at corporate headquarters and CEO Kevin Dubois. In 2015, Dubois literally wrote the book on the dry cleaning business-- *Entrepreneurial Insanity in the Dry Cleaning Business*. Co-authored with Roger McManus, the book creates a road map for current and prospective dry cleaners to achieve a greater level of success.

“What we’ve found in training Lapels Dry Cleaning franchise owners is there are certain skills you can learn to successfully

Quality of Life Difference

Kimberly Wilkinson falls into that category. She loved her job as a relationship manager for an investment management firm in Boston. Yet after having a child, it didn’t take long for her to realize a change had to be made to sustain a proper work-life balance.

Both Wilkinson and her husband liked the idea of buying a franchise, but realized the unlikelihood of finding a viable option in their area of expertise, financial services. So they researched other industries, specifically looking for a product or service customers would come back for again and again.

“There are a lot of challenges that go with leaving the military and trying to enter the private sector job force. For some veterans, not having a proper suit for that big interview can be one of them.” - Brian Culver, former navy pilot and Lapels Dry Cleaning of OKC owner



Lapels Dry Cleaning of Oxford Owner John Edwards

Said Wilkinson, “Everything I wore for my job had to be dry cleaned, so a dry cleaning franchise fit our number one criteria. The fact that Lapels pioneered an environmentally superior product sealed the deal for us.”

Wilkinson opened Lapels Dry Cleaning of Kingston in August 2015 and subsequently took over a satellite location, Lapels Dry Cleaning of Marshfield, in October 2015. In February 2016, construction was completed on a dry cleaning plant for Lapels Dry Cleaning of Marshfield.

Giving Back to the Community

Former Navy pilot Brian Culver and his wife Stacey opened Lapels Dry Cleaning of Oklahoma City in 2013. It was the first Lapels to open in the state of Oklahoma. In addition to providing a means to

support their family, the business offered Culver an opportunity to give back to fellow veterans.

It started when one of his customers, Channel 9 weatherman Jed Castles, wanted to donate his used suits to veterans. Culver offered to dry clean, press and deliver the suits to Paralyzed Veterans of America for distribution to veterans.

“There are a lot of challenges that go with leaving the military and trying to enter the private sector job force. For some veterans, not having a proper suit for that big interview can be one of them,” said Culver. “With the Lapels opportunity, we were able to put a program in place where we will clean used suits that are in good condition and, through the Paralyzed Veterans of America, make sure they get to job-seeking veterans.”

Choosing Your Environment

Working in the oil and gas industry required the Oxford, Mississippi native John Edwards to relocate to several different states—Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Ohio. It was in Louisiana where he met his fiancé Ali.

“I was doing well in my career but not living where I wanted to and was away from my fiancé. That’s when I revisited the idea of owning my own business and moving back to Mississippi,” said Edwards.

Edwards’ research focused on a number of criteria: how much capital would be needed; sustainability of the business in good economic times and bad, etc. The dry cleaning industry seemed to fit those criteria, but which one. More research led him to Lapels Dry Cleaning.

Edwards opened Lapels Dry Cleaning of Oxford on October 8, 2016, a little more than one month before his wedding.

As for creating more millionaires, Kevin Dubois is quick to point that fact has never been documented. Said Dubois, “It’s also not often disputed. So there has to be something to the fact that the right person, with the right franchise in the right environment, can be successful in the dry cleaning industry.”

Lapels Dry Cleaning has more than 80 locations in the United States, with operations in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas.

For more information, visit www.lapelsdrycleaning.com.