

Cleveland Daily Banner

Baldschun finds opportunity in pool maintenance business

by David Davis
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PETER BALDSCHUN gave up selling insurance in his father's firm to start a pool business in Cleveland at the age of 26. Banner photo, DAVID DAVIS

Peter Baldschun was raised in Macon, Ga., went to school there at Mercer University and later joined his father's firm, Kent A. Baldschun Insurance.

It was a good life and he was as successful as he could be at 23. His future was bright. It took him a little more than a year to figure out he really didn't like selling insurance.

In the meantime, two older siblings graduated from Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Ga., and fell in love with the area around Chattanooga.

"I've got other family up here. My sister, Jane, married Ben Harper and they've been here for a long time. I just really love this area, the river, the mountains and everything it has to offer," he said.

Back home in Macon, Baldschun realized there were some things he didn't like about selling insurance. So, bright future or not, he began looking for something else.

"There were things about that occupation I couldn't come to peace with," he said. "Me and my brother, John, actually had the same type of experience in insurance; he left before I did. He was selling insurance in Chattanooga, but he got out of it and started

a pool company."

It seems like a huge leap to go from selling insurance to cleaning pools, but he wanted his own business.

"John liked what he was doing in insurance. He just didn't love it," Baldschun said. "He wanted to run his own company. He wanted a different type of business and he did a lot of research about this company. We are good friends with the Vernons of Macon. Stewart Vernon is president of American Swimming Pools. When John started looking at his options, it was very natural for him to start with this because of our relationship with the Vernons."

The opportunity in Chattanooga for an ASP franchise was big, so John went into business in 2008 with his future brother-in-law, Jesse Pettit, who later married Emily Baldschun.

"They've just been lighting it up. They've enjoyed it and they've done very well with their company," he said. "I was looking at that stuff while I was still with the insurance company. I love Macon. It's where I grew up and I love the area up here. I was coming up here, seeing what they were doing and liking what I saw.

"I came up here and started working with John. I really liked what I was doing," he said. "We did some work in Cleveland

here and there installing pool liners for contractors, and I wanted in. It just made sense for me to take the next step. With everything going on up here, we knew we wanted to be here, but we didn't know how soon. But after 1 1/2 years down there, I was pretty much ready to get started up here."

At age 26, Baldschun, his brother and brother-in-law launched ASP of Cleveland in March. The first month, he said, was much better than expected and he's excited to get a full year behind him. He believes youthful energy and bringing fresh ideas to the pool business will give him an advantage over established companies.

"When we started looking up here, we saw there were a number of other pool companies and that's what you want to see," he said.

"Competition is good and good competition is better, because it means there is a healthy environment for what you want to do."

Baldschun said they are trying to bring new ideas to the local pool industry such as their pool maintenance plan.

"On Saturday, you can dive into the pool with your family instead of cleaning your pool," he said. "I think our maintenance plan distinguishes us from other pool companies."