

# College freshman learns the ins and outs of running a painting business



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**College freshman learns the ins and outs of running a painting business** By Heather

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Patrick Gardiner never thought as a freshman in college he would be running his own painting business.

"I never saw myself as a business owner this young, but this is a great opportunity for me to learn, give back and make some money to pay for college," the 19-year-old College of Charleston business student and Socastee High School graduate said.

His good fortune has led him to create a scholarship fund for children who have lost a parent or guardian. He plans to finance the scholarships by kicking in 10 percent of his profits.

Gardiner knows from personal experience how much kids struggle when they lose a parent. His father Tom died with cancer when the youngster was in his sophomore year of high school.

"I am open with everything that happened to me, but it was very tough," he said.

Called Myrtle Beach Painters, Gardiner's business is part of the Young Entrepreneurs Across America program that helps young people learn the ins and outs of running a business.

In the program, students run their own painting businesses by hiring other students for their crews.

"We mainly do hand-painted exterior jobs from houses to ramps and docks," he said. "We also do pressure washing and deck staining."

His is already booked through May and June, but the students will paint throughout the summer, working full-time hours, earning decent wages.

Gardiner and his crew will be trained in the art of painting through the Sherwin Williams Company before they actually start working for customers.

"Starting out, I am going to pay the painters \$8 per hour with the opportunity for 25-cents raises over the summer. There is also room for one of the workers to advance to a production manager's position over the summer and that person will earn \$9.50 per hour," he said. "I have it all figured out, now I just need the workers."

This past Sunday Gardiner was set to interview 20 potential employees.

"I am looking for someone who has a good team spirit and would work well in groups," he said. "I want it to be a team atmosphere."

As recently as September, Gardiner was a normal college freshman.

"I was doing the college thing, but then I heard about the possibility of running your own painting business for the summer, and I thought that might be a great idea for me," he said.

He applied for the Young Entrepreneurs Across America program and was accepted in October.

Gardiner said over Christmas break he created his business plan and went to training in January in Charlotte, N.C.

During the training, Gardiner said he learned how to market his business, figure job estimates and manage a crew.

Since then Gardiner has come back to Myrtle Beach every weekend to make sales calls.

"We put up signs and made some cold calls so that I could grow the business and get people interested in hiring Myrtle Beach Painters," he said.

After a few weeks of hard work, Gardiner said the calls started coming in.

"This weekend, I have five estimates and the previous weekends have consisted of six or seven estimates," he said. "People love the idea of a student running the business who hires students to do the work."

When he goes on a sales call, Gardiner said he makes sure all the decision makers in the household are present and he listens to the homeowners.

"If the decision makers aren't there, it is hard to get someone to sign on for a project," he said.

Once all the pertinent people are present, Gardiner goes over his estimate and explains the program to the homeowners.

"I tell them all about what the Young Entrepreneurs Across America program is and how it works," he said. "I then give them an estimate and say that if they are onboard that we require a 20 percent deposit. After they have signed on, we book them on the schedule for the summer."

Young Entrepreneurs Across America provides each student a line of credit to purchase the necessary supplies to get started.

Sherwin-Williams provides the paint and then takes a portion of the profits to cover costs.

"The rest of the profits, after I have paid for the paint and paid the workers, goes to me," Gardiner said. "I plan on using it to pay for school and to set up the scholarship fund."

Because of his hard work, Gardiner is currently ranked fifth in the Carolinas and in the top 20 in the country in the Young Entrepreneurs Across America program.

He hopes to be number one in the Carolinas by the end of the summer.

"My goal is to bring in \$65,000 in sales for the entire summer to be at the top," he said.

If all things go as planned, Gardiner said he hopes to continue running his own business and grow his company.

"I have learned leaps and bounds with this program and I can only go up from here," he said. "It has made me step out of my comfort zone and really get out there. Someday, I would like to be an executive in the company."

Gardiner said his mother Mary Beth and his grandparents, Pat and Mary Ann Mulloy, really support him in his endeavors.

"My mom is thrilled that I am doing this and I know that my dad would be proud," he said. "He is my inspiration for the scholarship fund...He helped a lot in the community and actually started the Myrtle Beach Marathon. He left his mark on the community, and I plan to as well."

Family is very important to the young man.

"My family lives across the street from me and every Sunday we have brunch together," he said. "They mean a lot to me and support me a lot."

To have Gardiner come out for an estimate, call 685-2312. Because of his school schedule, he gets back to Myrtle Beach Fridays around 3 p.m. and does estimates until Sunday at 5 p.m.

"We can paint anything," he said. "Small jobs and big jobs, we can do it."