

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

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Entrepreneur succeeds in disaster cleanup service



Photos by Joseph Fuqua II/The Enquirer

Brian Drinnen (left) of North College Hill and Michael McKinney of Westwood, both disaster service technicians, restock one of the RestorAid trucks. RestorAid offers many services, such as cleaning and drying flood-damaged carpets and upholstery.

Son follows father into Restoration business

By Anna Guido
Enquirer contributor

WOODLAWN - Keith Desserich is a third-generation entrepreneur who started working in his family's residential carpet cleaning business as a youth.

Nearly two decades later, Desserich, 31, is still cleaning - but on a much larger scale, and on his own.

RestorAid Disaster Restoration, which Desserich founded in 1997, provides a full line of residential cleaning and disaster restoration services - including cleaning and drying flood-damaged carpets and upholstery, mold remediation and even building reconstruction.

"I've been cleaning carpets all my life," he said.

Starting with one office and about a dozen clients, RestorAid grew to more than 150 clients by 1999. Last year, RestorAid had more than 800 customers divided among its Cincinnati and Columbus offices and will soon

open a third location in Knoxville, Tenn.

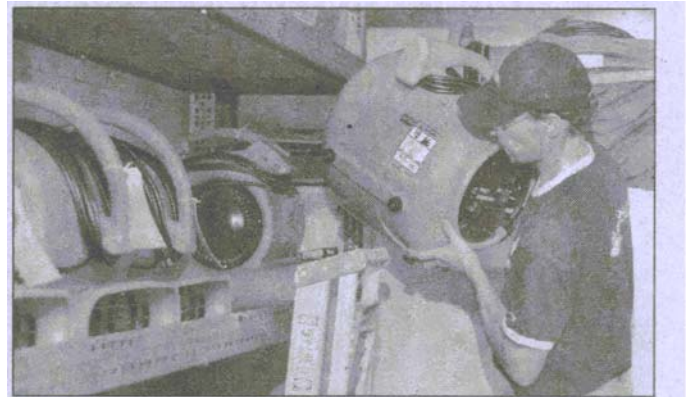
Desserich would not disclose company revenues but said an average-size job can cost \$4,000 to \$8,000. Last year the company was hired for more than 800 jobs between its Cincinnati and Columbus offices.

During its first three years, sales grew from 300 percent to 400 percent annually, Desserich said.

Business was so good, in fact, that he struck out on his own and became a direct competitor of his father's cleaning business, Cincinnati-based Coit Services Inc.

"It (business) is starting to level off a little, but in the beginning it was pretty dynamic," Dennis Desserich said of his son's company.

The elder Desserich bought a small disaster restoration company in 1983 and turned it over to Keith after his son graduated from Miami University.



Brian Drinnen restocks a RestorAid truck. The company, owned by Keith Desserich, also offers mold remediation and building reconstruction.

RestorAid Disaster Restoration

- **Founded:** 1997
- **Number of Employees:** 36
- **Awards:** 2006 Better Business Bureau International Torch Award finalist for Marketplace Ethics; 2005 Cincinnati Better Business Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics; 2006 Goering Center Family

Business of the Year "community service award" winner.

• **Address and Information:**
10280 Chester Road, Woodlawn, OH, 45215; 2467 Scioto Harper Drive, Columbus, OH 43204; 1-877-378-6724; www.restoraid.com

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Cleanup: Spin-off business succeeds

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Keith said he remembers his dad warning him that his line of work was not family friendly.

But Keith didn't shy away from the challenge. He eventually built a large enough client base to spin off from his father's business and run his own operation under the RestorAid brand.

George Seurkamp, vice president of Kinker-Eveleigh Insurance Agency in Kenwood - a commercial client of RestorAid and also the company's insurance agency - said mold insurance is a specialized area, and if insurance companies were not convinced that Keith Desserich "wasn't very good at what he does," they wouldn't write his insurance.

Seurkamp hired RestorAid for a mold remediation job at Kinker-Eveleigh's offices that resulted from leaky windows.

"If a job done by him results in a claim of poor performance, then our insurance companies would have to respond to those claims," Seurkamp said. "Insurance companies are very pleased with how Keith runs his business, and they are very willing to write his insurance."

Both father and son now run their own companies, but they also work together and even bid on some of the same jobs.

"Every day I compete with my father and uncle on cleaning jobs,"

Keith said. "It makes it interesting for family get-togethers."

His dad, who asked his son simply to "bring something into it" when he joined the family business, couldn't be more proud.

He said his son has "found his own niche" and fully expects him to continue to be successful in a virtually recession-proof industry.

The father is also proud of the recognition his son has received for his business practices.

RestorAid was one of nine finalists for a BBB International Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics in 2005, after winning locally in 2005.

Jocile Ehrlich, president of the Cincinnati Better Business Bureau, said RestorAid has provided mold remediation, remodeling and other services at no charge for cash-strapped families. And on numerous occasions the company has responded to warranty concerns, even though the warranty had expired.

"In an industry where kick-backs and price gouging is usually acceptable, this company has set new trends and standards," she said.

Dennis Desserich said there's only one problem with his son's success: "RestorAid took him away from my business and out of the succession plan - now we're looking for succession plans in both businesses."

E-mail aguido@fuse.net