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Making dry cleaning 'green'



Tyler Anderson says Blue Sky Cleaners' environmentally-friendly process cleans without the "dry cleaning smell."

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Cars and homes are becoming more environmentally friendly, so why shouldn't the neighborhood dry-cleaner.

Blue Sky Cleaners, 5412 Roberts St., opened two weeks ago to offer Shawnee residents a cleaner, or rather greener, way of dry cleaning. Tyler Anderson, co-owner, said the business' dry cleaning processes are not only safer for the environment, but customers also will be able to see, feel and smell a big difference in their clothes compared to regular dry cleaning.

Anderson opened the business with the help of his father-in-law, who has more than 20 years of experience in dry cleaning with his own business in Iowa. Anderson and his wife moved to the area two years ago because she was attending the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

The couple liked the Midwest feeling of community in Kansas City, Anderson said, so they decided to make it their long-term home to raise a family and open their business here.

“And Shawnee is a top-notch place for that,” Anderson said.

They chose the Woodsonia West retail center for its visibility and proximity to neighborhoods. They also did a lot of research on what kind of products to use in the business, Anderson said; they became very interested in products other than perchloroethylene, a petroleum-based solvent most dry cleaners use.

“Perc,” as those in the industry call it, is known to cause some health issues and can affect the central nervous system for those with a high exposure to the chemical. It is classified as a carcinogen, and it also is known as a soil contaminant when not disposed of properly.

So Blue Sky gets its “green” label from its affiliation with GreenEarth Cleaning, a company also affiliated with Proctor & Gamble and General Electric and based in the Kansas City area.

GreenEarth Cleaning uses a liquid silicone cleaner rather than “perc,” which 85 percent of dry cleaners in the nation use. Its manufacturers say the cleaner can be safely disposed of because the solution breaks down into water, carbon dioxide and sand, its three natural components.

Anderson said the process is known not only to lack the “dry cleaning” smell, it also protects the color of clothes, keeps them from shrinking and keeps fabrics soft.

“It refreshes the fiber, and it has an all-around better smell,” he said. “You can feel the difference in it.”

Anderson said the solution is able to carefully clean everything in-house, from shirts to wedding gowns to leather and suede items.

“There’s an attention to detail with every piece,” he said.

And though the process is relatively new, Anderson says the prices are competitive with other dry cleaners.

Anderson said his wife came up with the name to reflect the business’s green approach.

“The name is just showing a blue sky of possibilities to protect our community,” Anderson said.

Blue Sky can be contacted at (913) 422-3433.