

Claire and Jeff Corley  
Improving Your Outlook  
by  
Brian Campbell

Claire and Jeff Corley's initial interest in repairing windows came from personal need. All of the windows in their house were fogging up and Jeff was certain that there was an alternative to the high price of replacing them.

"I remembered seeing an episode of This Old House; they showed a technique of drilling out windows, so I told Claire, 'I think I can fix our windows'," Jeff says. "She told me to get on the internet and find a company that offers the service."

Jeff found one place in Ottawa, but they wouldn't offer the service in Winnipeg, so Jeff and Claire went there to learn how to do it. Jeff was laid off from Bristol Aerospace at the time and he was open for something new. So in 2007, they started defogging windows, and in 2011 All About Windows was born.

But right from the beginning, modifications needed to be made on the original design. "The company that trained us, mainly dealt with dual pane windows, but in Manitoba we mostly have tri-pane," Jeff says. "They told us that there was a different way to do tri-panes, but we would have to bring the equipment into the house to do part of the work. We did that the first season, but then we found a way to do it all from outdoors."

Claire and Jeff are always looking for ways to improve the quality of their work and their product. "We are constantly doing research and development," Jeff says. "We are now on our sixth generation vent. Our first one had an extremely short lifespan, so we immediately went to work on creating a better, UV resistant, one. This past fall I came up with one that is super hydrophobic, which means that water can't come in from the outside, but water vapour can escape from inside the window out."

From a time where they had to rely on others for everything they needed, they have now become pretty much a self-contained company. "We've sourced everything out, and there are only a few items that we have to get from outside the city,"

Claire says. “We try to support local as much as possible. And, some things we manufacture ourselves.”

At one point, they even had other dealers coming to them for supplies. “We had started a forum at that time, to troubleshoot ideas,” Claire says. “And people were asking how to get supplies. So we started supplying them.”

They have also trained other people in window defogging. One of the people they trained has now opened an All About Windows in Calgary. Jeff says, “We trained her, but she runs her own company there.”

“We’d like to set people up doing this across Canada,” he adds.. “As more people hear about what we can offer them, they are coming on board.”

“We will be there to offer them support as they get started,” Claire adds. “And if they don’t want to source out their own equipment, we can get it for them.”

But other than supplies, the next most important thing is to get your business known. “The first thing we tell people is that if you don’t have money to advertise, don’t even think about this,” Jeff says. “Because we want you to succeed.”

“You can’t not advertise. If you don’t advertise, you’re not getting business,” Claire says, “And we’ve tried everything, so we know what works and what doesn’t.”

“We haven’t tried skywriting,” Jeff quips.

“We’re not going to do skywriting,” Claire assures him.

Jeff is almost over qualified for repairing windows. After working at Bristol Aerospace for 21 years, he went from working in the Stores Area; to production control of the Black Brant rocket program; the building of Rolls Royce engines; Boeing 747 wing to body fairings, making the structure that holds the wing on the aircraft; then retrofitting aircrafts.

“They were bringing in CF5’s for avionics updates, so we stripped the aircrafts down and rebuilt them with new avionics,” Jeff says. “After that, they offered me the position of master scheduler for the company. Then the downturn came.”

Claire worked as a ward clerk at Misericordia Hospital for 14 years, tried a brief term as a Real Estate agent, then worked at a nursing home for eight years. “Then I ended up at Superstore, until we started this business,” she says.

Although most of their work is spring, summer and fall, winter is spent setting up for spring, doing quotes, going to trade shows and basically getting ready to go. “We’ve always got some work to do,” Claire says. “Plus we take some time off, because when we’re going, we go seven days a week.”

“We are also in the process of training someone to do commercial work now,” Jeff adds. “In our residential work, a good 99% of the work is outside, so we are not invasive. But commercial work we can do from the inside because there is lower humidity and there is HVAC components in the building. So commercial work can be done as long as the exterior temperature is above -10c .”

“We provide the green alternative to replacing windows,” Claire says. “Do you really want to replace your windows every 10 years?”

“We save our customers money,” Jeff adds. “We save them up to 70% over replacement costs.”

The target market for All About Windows are people who like to maintain their homes. Which is one of the reasons that brought them to Linden Woods just over two years ago. “Most of our work is in this area,” Jeff says. “We cut 40 minutes a day out of our travel time by moving here.”

“We get constant advertising with our van out front,” Claire says. “A lot of people call and say ‘I got the number off your truck’.”

“Or in the evening I’ll be out in the garage getting the equipment ready and people who are out for a walk or riding their bikes come up to talk to me,” Jeff adds.

But it’s more than just the business. “We love it here. Love it,” Claire says. “The neighbours are really, really good. We made friends with our neighbours right away. You just get to know people.”

“Everything is within walking distance, and I’ll take the dog out for a walk at night without thinking twice about it,” she adds. “I just feel comfortable here. It’s been a nice experience living here.”

Claire and Jeff spend so much time living and breathing All About Windows that they rarely take much time off. “It’s non-stop, there are no after hours. We are constantly on and sometimes you get an idea in the middle of the night,” Claire says. “But we still find time for a glass of wine.”

However, they did get a chance to get away to celebrate their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last year. Jeff says, “We went on a Caribbean Cruise.”

“Our very first big holiday ever,” Claire adds. “It was nice.”

They do get to walk the trails with the dog when the weather is good, although that is a bit challenging since their slow time is winter. “Even the dog doesn’t want to go out long when it’s very cold, so I come home and knit,” Claire says. “There’s always Netflix.”

Jeff’s winter activities alternate between visiting neighbours and snow shoveling, but he has been getting back into pool playing when he has the time. He also planning to combine his love for pool playing with giving back to the community. “We’re looking at sponsoring the English Billiard League next year,” he says.

Jeff and Claire are still settling into life in Linden Woods and looking forward to meeting more of their neighbours as time goes on, whether it’s for business purposes or just to say hi. Claire says, “Come and see us, we’re always happy to talk to you.”