



Tina Porter



by Allison Hester, eClean Editor



Tina Porter entered into the cleaning industry somewhat by chance, but boy, is she glad she did. Over the past three years, Tina has washed houses, windows, gutters, flatwork, apartment complexes, historic structures, restored decks, sealed pavers, and the list goes on and on. And not only has she found a process that she is passionate about, she also found true love in the process.

Learning the Business

Around three-and-a-half years ago, Tina met and became good friends with Len Sutton of Sea to Summit Pressure Washing, LLC, in

Clemson, SC. Tina recognized that Len could use some help with the bookkeeping, mailings and other administrative tasks. “While Len could handle the paperwork, he was growing

to where he just didn’t have the time,” she explained.

Soon after, she decided to power wash her own home herself using a small, inexpensive machine. Tina found power washing to be difficult, time-consuming and cumbersome – and to top it off, she couldn’t reach the second story of her house. She eventually asked Len for his help finishing the project.

“Len went back over the whole house, including the areas I had hand scrubbed,” Tina said. “What he did was nothing like I had ever seen or considered pressure washing to be.”

In the meantime, a number of events went into play. First, Tina found she had a lot of questions about the meaning of different industry terms and was trying to learn the business. So Len suggested she come out in the field to see first-hand what the cleaning entailed. Second, somewhere along the way, she and Len began dating.

She loved the low pressure washing process – a.k.a. “soft washing” – and the ability to clean several stories high while standing on the ground. Seeing the dramatic before and afters of low pressure cleaning left her in awe – and energized. “The whole concept of cleaning with good detergents and low-pressure water without having to work off of ladders amazed me. I got hooked.”

Because Tina was working a full-time desk job for the Cancer Centers of the Carolinas and Len was cleaning most evenings and weekends, so to spend time together, she would go with him to work. After finishing her day job, Tina would meet up with Len on the jobsite in the

evenings, work weekends, and help whenever she had some time off. Tina also learned how to do estimates so that she could assist with the schedule, cover more ground, and help Len achieve his company goals.

As Tina learned more about the cleaning processes and the business itself, she also helped with marketing. She was great at sales, largely because of her fervor for educating customers. “I always look at it from a customer’s standpoint, and I’ve seen the differences it makes in peoples’ homes and lives,” she explained. “I’m passionate about informing customers on the right way to clean things because I’ve experienced the wrong way first hand and have seen the damage that can happen by doing it the wrong way. Educating customers gives me that warm fuzzy feeling, which is another reason I love this job.”

Tina is also passionate about gaining more education herself, and is constantly learning new things from Len and other industry members. The couple has attended various industry-related events – including the National Cleaning Expo (NCE) in Tampa, the Sunbrite round table meetings in Atlanta and the PWNC round table meeting in Myrtle Beach – to learn not only about cleaning, but about running a more efficient business. She also attended a Seal N Lock class and became a certified technician to seal pavers.

Perhaps best of all, Tina has learned how to properly clean many different types of surfaces and to take care of her own home. “I really enjoy doing the work,” she said. “I love having the customers come out and see the results of a black gutter turning back into a white gutter, or a house they thought needed to be painted actually only needed a very good cleaning.”

Made Just for Her

In fact, because of her love of cleaning and her work ethic, she often took over the work – “because it’s so much fun” – while Len ran the hoses. So earlier this year, when Sea to Summit’s old trailer finally gave way, Len put together a new trailer – complete with a machine designed specifically for Tina. “We now have a ‘his’ and a ‘her’ machine,” she laughed.

Tina stressed that she “does not lift weights,” but she can run a machine and clean

up to four stories high without getting on a ladder – something customers often must see to believe. Len listened to Tina’s feedback about matching equipment to her capabilities and put together a system that’s comfortable for her. He has also implemented some of Tina’s other ideas for the new trailer, such as adding a locker where she can lock up her purse, keep a change of clothes, etc. He also added a few extras like interior lights, a mounted mirror and even a cell phone charger. She also told Len that females had “going to the bathroom issues that guys do not have,” so Len provided her a camper-style portably potty. “Our trailer is enclosed and the door is lockable from the inside, so privacy is no longer an issue.”

Timing is everything, and the company’s growth, Tina’s newfound enjoyment of the job, and now their October wedding have fallen into place. About a month ago, Tina’s company went through a merger and Tina was laid off after 14 years. Sea to Summit has grown exponentially, and Len needs to start looking for another full-time employee very soon. Now, the newly-married “dynamic duo” is set to grow their business – and their future – together.

Tina added that she is “very proud” of Len for his accomplishments and is grateful to be a part of them. “To any home or business owner, I truly recommend the low pressure washing process and process/techniques that Sea to Summit Pressure Washing uses to help maintain your home or business,” she added.

“This really is the perfect job for me,” Tina stressed. “I’m getting to work with Len, and we enjoy that time together. I am supporting him in his company dream and investing in our future. I’m meeting new people and getting to see a lot of beautiful homes. I enjoy the work so much because I believe in the process and can see the results immediately. I’m learning lots of new things. I’m out in the field instead of behind a desk.” Best of all, she concluded, “When I go home at night, I can honestly say that I’ve had a rewarding day.”

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