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GRIT, GRACE, AND PAINT

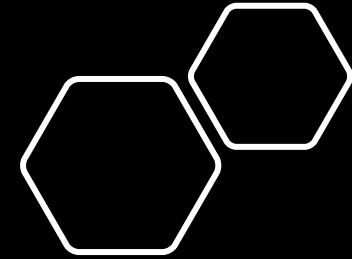
COMMUNITY PULSE

LISA NOWELL

CertaPro Painters
of Greenville East

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Lisa and Mark Nowell of
Greer have owned and
operated CertaPro Painters of
Greenville East since 2023. But
Lisa has been painting since
she was a teenager. PROVIDED



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COMMUNITY PULSE

Painter Built Her Career And Businesses One Bold Brushstroke At A Time



For most of her career, Lisa Nowell never saw another woman painter on the job. She says she's proud that several women are part of the 10 crews at CertaPro Painters of Greenville East. PROVIDED

BY KATHY LAUGHLIN

Lisa Nowell was born to paint. So, she did – usually the only woman on a jobsite.

"My grandpa painted. My mom and dad painted. Most of my uncles and aunts painted," says Lisa, co-owner of CertaPro Painters of Greenville East.

"I was born into it," she says.

Grandpa started the long line of painters. "He was the original painter in the Taylors/Greer area. Local boys would work for him, start their own painting businesses as adults and make a good living," she says.

Lisa's father, Larry Kemp, did the same – except that he married into the family and the business before striking out on his own.

"My mom, Sandra, painted with him," Lisa says.

"I feel like my mama was the original woman painter because, back then, it would have been so unusual."

Lisa and her siblings helped their parents as teens. So, when Lisa fell for Mark, her high school sweetheart ... "He didn't know that he was going to get sucked into the painting world," she says.

Both were working for Lisa's father by 1991, when they married. In keeping with the family tradition, they formed their own company a few years later.

"Then it was Mark and me together. We ran that painting company," Lisa says.

"I don't remember any jobsite where I saw another woman."

She jokes that tradesmen were surprised to see a petite, 5-foot-1-inch woman painting alongside everyone else.

"This is a male-dominated field. Since it's in my blood, I was comfortable. But it takes a lot of grit and grace," she says.

As for the grit ... "It's manual labor. You need toughness and determination to do well, no matter how your body feels."

As for the grace ... "When you're dealing with customers, you need a level of understanding, compassion. You need to want to

take care of them. That's what I call grace. I feel like women have a little bit more of that grace, in general."

Lisa and Mark ran their business for more than a decade.

"We worked mostly with new construction. That was booming until the housing bubble burst in 2007, 2008," Lisa says. "A lot of the builders ... they weren't building anymore."

The Nowells, who live in Greer, hung up their paintbrushes.

For a while.

Mark launched into transport refrigeration. A friend taught Lisa to become a court reporter.

But by the early 2020s, they decided to get back to their "roots."

"It was like coming home. It felt natural," Lisa says. "We missed our company when we weren't painting anymore."

Mark took a job at CertaPro Painters of Greenville East.

(CertaPro Painters Ltd. was founded in 1992 as a subsidiary of FirstService Brands. There are several franchises in the Upstate.)

When the owners decided to sell their locally owned and operated franchise, Lisa began talking to her husband about buying the business.

"It was a huge leap of faith," she says. "But I felt confident. I'm like, 'We can do it. Let's just do it.' My husband's always been a little bit more conservative."

They bought the business. Lisa took over the financial, marketing and administrative operations. Their daughter, Kara, was instrumental in getting the business up and running, her mom says. Kara also worked for the previous owners, though she's now at a law firm and will graduate from law school this year.

The Nowells' son, Lee, took over commercial sales. The residential sales associate, David Morschauser, stayed on. Hunter Cox became the production manager, and Angela Willis is the office manager.

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Together, they manage and coordinate 10 crews of two to five painters.

"That's the leap of faith. The volume of work is on a larger scale," Lisa says. "Before, it was just my husband and me and a few employees through the years. That's nothing like dealing with 10 crews."

She says it helps that Mark was the general manager before the Nowells bought the business in 2023.

Over time, she says, their large staff has become a "good family."

"Everyone cares about the customers and has a desire for the business to be better, to find better ways to do things. They're open-minded. That makes all the difference," she says.

"It's a source of pride for me that we have several crews with women. Women are still well outnumbered in the industry. But I like the change."

Lisa says the company emphasizes customer service: communicating clearly, cleaning up, respecting the owner's

"Sometimes, a customer is really not sure what they want. You don't tell them what to do or talk them into something. But you have to know how to ask the right questions to help them make decisions."

LISA NOWELL
CertaPro Painters of Greenville East

property, showing up on time.

Salespeople follow a checklist to determine what people want painted inside or on the exterior of their homes – walls, trim, ceilings, shutters, porches, soffits and dozens of other options. Contracts specify a yes or a no for each item.

"They can pick and choose what they want," Lisa says.

"Something you learn over the years is to get really specific. Sometimes, a

customer is really not sure what they want. You don't tell them what to do or talk them into something. But you have to know how to ask the right questions to help them make decisions."

CertaPro Painters of Greenville East provides a two-year warranty on its work.

Customers also have contact numbers for everyone from the crew leader to Lisa. A call center is available after

hours and will reach Mark or Lisa if necessary.

The company is licensed, insured and bonded. It is a member of the Home Builders Association of Greenville and has an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau.

The business can accept commercial jobs anywhere in the Upstate. Residential work is limited to specific ZIP codes.

Lisa says CertaPro Painters of Greenville East may – or may not – provide the lowest estimate.

"We encourage customers to compare us with other painters," she says. The lowest bid isn't always the best choice. "Cheaper doesn't always mean you're getting the most for your money."

One potential problem, she says, is not being able to reach the painter if an issue arises after the job is done and the bill is paid.

Most painters don't have a reputation built across generations.

"We've lived in the community all our lives. We're not going anywhere."

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The advertisement features a dark blue background on the left with white text. On the right, there is a photograph of a modern, round smart thermostat mounted on a white wall. The thermostat's screen displays the number '72'. In the background of the photo, a window and a potted plant are visible.