

# Westham Life

A SOCIAL MAGAZINE CREATED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE RESIDENTS OF GREATER WESTHAM

## Meet the Owner

Lauren Luna



It's an uncommon story. A business man leaves the corporate world to pursue a career that Mike Rowe has featured on the television series, "Dirty Jobs," but that is just what Chimney Saver Solutions owner, Kirby Ragland, did.

It was chance that Kirby met a local Chimney Sweep in the late 1990s when his former company, Computerland, began selling off divisions, threatening Kirby with relocation. Not wanting to leave Richmond, Kirby started considering a new line of work.

"I met this Chimney Sweep and I thought 'Wow, that must be hard work ... and why would anyone want to do that!'" says Kirby. With a business degree, he started helping the man and soon learned more and more about the profession.

"I started delving into it part time and I just kept getting more and more optimistic about the possibilities," he says. "I took CSIA courses and caught on quickly, people liked me, I did great work and I had success with my marketing materials, which I would create myself and pass out door-to-door. It was a slow, arduous process consisting of a lot of work combined with some crazy vision that there was something special here and I wanted to be a part of it!"

In 2002 Chimney Saver Solutions was created and a few years later it was incorporated. Today Kirby and his employees service homeowners of the Greater Richmond area. "We are unusual in that we do smaller, common jobs (sweeping, caps, etc.) as well as more complicated large jobs," he says.

One of the more complicated, large jobs that they recently accepted was a multimillion dollar chimney restoration of a 150-plus year old mansion outside of Charlottesville. "If a job is interesting enough and large enough, we will travel for it. For this job, we restored nine chimneys with huge fireplaces. The general contractor was very impressed and we have done other jobs for him since," Kirby says.



They have also traveled to Franklin to restore a 40-foot chimney devastated by a storm. “The owner of the home was a CEO of a bank and very particular. We were the only company she felt confident hiring. The job was from foundation up. She was very happy and gave us a great review” he says.

The majority of Kirby’s business is residential, but he does some commercial jobs. Many local contractors know him and refer their customers to him. He also receives a lot of calls from roofers when the homeowner incorrectly assumes that their roof is leaking. “When you consider the age of the house and the amount of rain that the chimney has been exposed to over the years, you start to understand how a mold smell, damp spots or discoloration on the ceiling or walls adjacent to the chimney are more likely caused by a leaking chimney. All masonry leaks ... but old chimneys leak badly. Get it fixed as soon as possible,” he says. Kirby’s popular tag line is, “Don’t Call a Roofer, We Fix Leaky Chimneys.”

Kirby and his team of experienced, CSIA certified technicians also provide chimney sweeping and routine inspections. Whether you heat with gas, oil or wood, your chimney still needs periodic inspections. “You need to be aware of your chimney’s condition and efficiency as they vent dangerous gases out of your home,” he explains. “It is a small price to pay for peace of mind.”

Kirby advises homeowners to have experienced, reputable technicians, like those his company employs, service your chimney. “Wood fires burn at 1700 degrees and oil and gas chimneys vent toxic gases. You do not want to neglect this important component of your home or hand it off to an inexperienced person,” he cautions.

In addition to re-ling and resurfacing more chimney flues than any other company in the area, Chimney Saver Solutions is also a

great company from which to purchase a wood stove or pre-fabricated fireplace replacement. “Not only do we repair chimneys but we also sell and install wood stoves. We purchase stoves from large distributors that carry all the top brands. We are the better option for most venting appliance installations versus the hearth store because we have much more field experience with chimneys and no store front overhead to drive up prices,” Kirby says.

Today, Kirby is still pleased with his career switch. “We treat our customers special. We take as much time as necessary to help them. We know they want us in and out of their home as quickly as possible and to do the job well. Many have been with us for a very long time,” he says.

When he does have down time, Kirby enjoys spending it with his wife of 22 years, Barbara, who is the clinical dietitian manager at St. Mary’s. The couple shares their home in the West End with three cats.

They also enjoy spending time at their house on the water in Urbanna. “We love the water, and during a recent mid-life crisis purchased a jet ski, which we now use more than our sailboat,” he says. “I’m also fortunate to be invited to sail in the Heineken Regatta in Saint Martin every couple of years with some other chimney business owners who have become close friends.”

Whether you own a new or older home, Kirby reminds you to “think about your chimney” and have periodic repairs and inspections done regularly. If you are in need of chimney services, contact Chimney Saver Solutions at 804-440-5000. To learn more, visit their website at <https://www.chimneysaversolutions.com/>.